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THE

WORKS

OF

THE REV. HUGH BINNING,

**VOL. II.**

BEING THE SECOND VOLUME OF

A SELECT LIBRARY OF SCOTTISH DIVINES,

TO BE PUBLISHED IN QUARTERLY VOLUMES.

WITH

LIVES OF THE AUTHORS, AND NOTES :

By JAMES COCHRANE, A.M.

LIBRARIAN TO THE EDINBURGH THEOLOGICAL LIBRARY.

~~~~~  
Prospectus.

It is one of the most cheering features of the times in which we live, that the reading public are so manifestly aware of the merits of our older writers, and that of late there has been such a demand for their works. May not this be considered as a token that there are many amongst us who are "asking for the old paths, where is the good way, that they may walk therein, and find rest for their souls?" Among the works which have issued from the press during the last few years, are many reprints of the older English writers. The general diffusion, and continued perusal of such productions, cannot but be followed by the most salutary effects upon the character and enlightenment of our population.

In this process of resuscitation, our Scottish divines can scarcely be said to have shared. Justice has not yet been done, in this respect, to the theological literature of Scotland. Edition after edition is announced of the works of Barrow and Baxter, of Taylor and Howe; but little or nothing has yet been done to put into the hands of the public, the no less precious remains of Rutherford and Gillespie, of Binning, and Dickson.

It is the object of the present publication to supply this deficiency. It is proposed to publish, in quarterly volumes, and with due attention to accuracy and neatness of typography, with Lives, and

explanatory Notes where required, a Series of Scottish Divines, embracing the whole works of some, and of others the principal pieces.

Such an undertaking, it is believed, will meet the wishes of a large portion of the reading and religious public of this country. The men, whose works it is proposed to republish, were eminently distinguished in their day, and took a leading part in the affairs of the church; and their names are still highly revered amongst us, and dear indeed as household words to every Scotchman. These works, which are now so scarce and high-priced, were once universally diffused, found in every cottage, and read by the serious and godly of all classes. To their influence the religious character which Scotland has so long borne is, therefore, in a very considerable degree to be attributed; and they who would estimate aright the peculiar cast of the Scottish mind, or the extent to which it has been imbued with religious principle, must take into consideration, not merely the pulpit, but also the literary discipline to which, for generations, it was thus subjected. While the works of the great English divines were chiefly read among the educated classes of the community, the whole people of Scotland, down to the poorest peasant, read, relished, and admired the works which it is now proposed to republish. As mere literary productions, therefore, these works have an interest peculiarly their own.

But it will also be generally admitted that they have a higher claim than this to the respect of the reading public, arising from their own intrinsic excellences. They are still fitted, as in former times, to commend themselves to the esteem of every Christian spirit. They will still furnish, as aforesaid, instruction, and the materials for interesting and profitable meditation, to every one who is in earnest respecting the eternal well-being of the soul. Few other writers in our language unfold in a simpler and more searching manner, the wants of fallen human nature, or exhibit in a clearer and more refreshing light, the most precious and consolatory doctrines of the gospel.

The publishers trust, therefore, that the present undertaking will meet with such encouragement as will enable them to carry it on and complete it.

The names of the principal authors whose works will be included in the Select Library of Scottish Divines, will be the following:—**KNOX, WELCH, ROLLOCK, BROWN OF WAMPHRAY, RUTHERFORD, GILLESPIE, DURHAM, DICKSON, HALYBURTON, BINNING, GUTHRIE, ANDREW GRAY, WILLISON, THE ERSKINES, BOSTON, RICCALTOUN, &c.**

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OF

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WITH

LIVES OF THE AUTHORS, AND NOTES.

BY

JAMES COCHRANE, A.M.

LIBRARIAN TO THE EDINBURGH THEOLOGICAL LIBRARY.

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THE  
SINNER'S SANCTUARY:  
BEING  
SERMONS ON THE EIGHTH CHAPTER OF  
THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.

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XVII.

Verse 5.—For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, &c.

THOUGH sin hath taken up the principal and inmost cabinet of the heart of man, though it hath fixed its imperial throne in the spirit of man, and makes use of all the powers and faculties in the soul to accomplish its accursed desires, and fulfil its boundless lusts; yet it is not without good reason expressed in Scripture, ordinarily under the name of flesh, and a body of death; and men dead in sins are said to be yet in the flesh. The reason is, partly because this was the rise of man's first ruin, or the chiefest ingredient in his first sin,—his hearkening to the suggestions of his flesh, against the clear light and knowledge of his spirit. The apple was beautiful to look on, and sweet to the taste, and this engaged man. Thus the voluntary debasement and subjection of the spirit, which was breathed in of God, unto the service of that dust which God had appointed to serve it, hath turned into a necessary slavery, so that the flesh being put in the throne, cannot be cast out; and this is the righteous

judgment of God upon man, that he that would not serve so good and so high a Lord, should be made a drudge and slave to the very dregs of the creation,—partly again, because the flesh hath in it the seeds of the most part of those evil fruits which abound in the world. The most part of our corruptions have either their rise or their increase from the flesh. The most part of the evils of men are either conceived in the flesh, or brought forth by it, by the ministry and help of our degenerate spirits. And truly this is it that makes our returning to God so hard and difficult a work, because we are in the flesh, which is like stubble, disposed to conceive flame upon any sparkle of a temptation. There are so many dispositions and inclinations in the body since our fall, that are as powerful to carry us to excess and inordinateness in affection or conversation, as the natural instincts of beasts do drive them on to their own proper operations. You know the flesh is oftentimes the greatest impediment that the spirit hath, because of its lumpishness and earthly quality. How willing would the spirit be, how nimble and active in the ways of obedience, if it were not retarded, dulled, and clogged with the heavy lump of our flesh! “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak,” saith Christ, Matt. xxvi. 41. Truly I think the great remissness, negligence, weakness, fainting of Christians, in their race of Christianity, ariseth ordinarily from this weight that is carried about with them, that it must be some extraordinary impulse of a higher Spirit, to drive us on without wearying. And because of this indisposition of the flesh, we are not able to bear much of God’s presence in this life,—it would certainly confound mortality, if so much were let out of it as is in heaven,—no more than a weak eye can endure to behold the sun in its brightness. And then the flesh, as it is the greatest retardment in good, it is the greatest incitement to evil. It is a bosom-enemy, that betrays us to Satan. It is near us, and con-natural to us. And this is the great advantage Satan hath of a Christian. He hath a friend within every

Christian, that betrays him often. You know the most part of temptations from without could have no such force or strength against us, if there were not some predisposition in the flesh, some seeds of that evil within,—if they were not presented with some suitableness to our senses. And being once engaged on Satan's side, they easily draw the whole man with them, under a false colour and pretence of friendship: therefore they are said to “war against the soul,” 1 Pet. ii. 11; and they are said “easily to beset us,” Heb. xii. 1. Truly it is no wonder that the enemy storm our city, when the out-works, yea, the very ports of the city, are possessed by traitors. No wonder Satan approach near the walls with his temptations, when our senses, our fleshly part, is so apt to receive him, and ready to entertain all objects without difference, that are suitable to affect them.

You see then how much power the flesh hath in man, so that it is no wonder that every natural man hath this denomination,—one after the flesh, one carnal from the predomining part, though the worst part. Every man by nature, till a higher birth come, may be called all flesh, all fashioned and composed of the flesh, and after the flesh,—even his spirit and mind fleshly and earthly, sunk into the flesh, and transformed into a brutish quality or nature. Now the great purpose of the gospel is, to bring alongst a deliverer unto your spirits, for the releasing and unfettering of them from the chains of fleshly lusts. This is the very work of Christianity, to give liberty to the captive souls of men, “and the opening of the prison to them that are bound,” Isaiah lxiii. 1. The souls of men are chained with their own fleshly lusts, and if at any time they can break these grosser chains, as some finer spirits have escaped out of the vilest dungeon of the flesh, and cast off these heavier chains that bind the most part of men, yet wholly escape they cannot. There be higher and lower rooms of this prison. There are some more gross, some more subtile cords and bands of the flesh; and whatsoever it be that holds a man bound, or in what-

soever house he be imprisoned, it is not much matter, since really he is bound, and his liberty restrained. If a chain of gold binds as fast as a chain of iron, there is no real difference, except that mockery is added unto it, when a man is detained in a golden prison with golden chains. Though some men, I say, escape the grosser pollutions of the flesh, yet they are fettered within some narrow, scant, and but imaginary good things,—they cannot go without the compass of those. Every man is confined by nature within the circle of his own narrow bosom, or if he expatiate into the field of the world, yet how narrow, how limited, are all created objects, for the infinite desires of the soul, whether it tend to the enjoyment of other creatures, or to the possession of some imaginary excellency in a man's self. How straitened are they! How imprisoned in all that compass! There is no true liberty can be found there. Though some may be disengaged from baser lusts, and the common vain employments of men; yet far they cannot go. They do but engage more with themselves the love and estimation of themselves. Without that compass they cannot possibly go, whether from another principle, or to another end. And, O how little bounds is within any created breast for the immortal spirit, that is so vast and expatiating in its desires, to dwell in!

But here is the perfect redemption that is in Jesus Christ. When he comes into the soul, he unfetters and releases it, not only of the grosser lusts of the flesh, but even of those subtile invisible bands of self-love, self-seeking, of all scant, narrow, and particular objects, and sets it at liberty to expatiate on that universal good, the infinite fulness of God, and grace which is in Christ Jesus. And hence a Christian is called one after the Spirit, that is, whose spirit is rid and delivered from that natural bondage and slavery to the creatures, and is espoused, at least in affection and endeavour, to the all-sufficient and self-sufficient God.

We told you, that this new nature of a Christian shews

itself in affection and motion, in minding and walking. Both are signs of life, and the proper actions of it. As the natural man is easily known by what he minds and savours, and what way he walks, so is the spiritual man. Minding or savouring comprehends, no doubt, all the inward acts of the soul, all the imaginations, cogitations, thoughts, affections, desires, and purposes of the soul. To express it shortly, there is a concurrence of these two, cogitation and affection, the understanding and the will, in this business. "The natural man knoweth not the things of the Spirit," so he cannot taste or relish them, since he doth not know them, 1 Cor. ii. 14. "How can they believe on him whom they have not heard?" But far more, how can men love and desire that which they do not know? Though it be hard to convince some that they know not God, nor the things of the Spirit, because they have some form of knowledge, and seem to understand, and can discourse on religion; yet I wonder that the most part of men, whose ignorance is written on their foreheads, with such palpable characters, should have so much difficulty to take with this challenge. I am sure, many that persuade themselves of heaven, are yet shut up in that dungeon of natural blindness and darkness of mind, and that so gross and thick darkness, that it is not possible to make them conceive any notion of spiritual things. The common twilight of nature is almost extinguished, and little or nothing increased by their education in the visible church. How can you prize and esteem Jesus Christ, of whom you know nothing but the bare name? How can you favour heaven, when you have never admitted one serious thought of the life to come? O that you could be persuaded that the grace of God is inconsistent with such gross ignorance as is in the generality of you. Truly grace is a light shining in the soul, that opens the eyes to see that light that surrounds us in the gospel. But will you consider, beloved, how ready you are to receive other things of no moment; how your memories can retain them, and your understandings receive other purposes very per-

plexed and laborious? But for the knowledge of your sin and misery, or of that blessed remedy shewed in the gospel, we cannot make you capable of a few questions about them; and if you learn the words by heart (as you use to speak) yet, alas! the matter and thing itself is not in the heart or mind. You have nothing but words, as appears. If we ask about the same matter in other words and terms, it is as dark and new to you as if you had never heard it. I beseech you consider, if you do not then mind the things of the flesh most, when you are not only most capable to know those things that concern this life, but most ready to entertain such thoughts. You have no difficulty to mind the world whole weeks and years, but you can never find leisure or time to mind the life to come; and yet vainly you say, you mind it always. I beseech you, how do you mind God, and the things of God, when, if you will but recollect your thoughts, and gather the sum of them, you will not find one serious advised thought of him or his matters in a whole week? I profess, I wonder how so many can enforce upon themselves a persuasion that God is always in their heart. I think it is the height of delusion. I am sure he is not one of ten thousand thoughts, that travel, walk, lodge, and dwell in the souls of men; and yet they will needs bear upon themselves that they always mind him. I am sure most of you cannot say, that ever you shut the doors of your hearts upon other vain objects, that you might retire to secret meditation on God, or conference with him; and I am as sure, that many men have God oftener in their mouths, by oaths and blasphemies, and irreverent speaking, and taking his holy name in vain, than in their minds, prayers, or praises, or in any holy meditations of him. Are you not as unwilling to fix your minds upon any sad solemn thoughts of God's justice, of hell, of heaven, of sin or misery, of death, as boys, whose heads are full of play, are loath to go to their books? Doth not your practice in this speak with these wicked men, Job. xxi. 14, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of the Almighty?"



How constrained are all your thoughts of religion! They are entertained as those whom you would not desire to come again. But how unconstrained, how free, are all other thoughts! Our minds can rove whole days about vanity, about fancies, dreams, nothings; but you neither like to admit nor retain the knowledge of God in your mind, Rom. i. 28. Do you not entertain any serious weighty thoughts of religion, that by occasion may enter as fire-brands, as hot coals, in your bosom? How glad are you to get any diversion to other things! How willing to shun them, or cast them out! But if it be any temporal thing, any thing relating to this flesh, your thoughts come freely off, are steady and fixed as long as you please; your minds can travel through all the ends of the earth, to bring in some fancy of gain or advantage, or to steal by precious time, and that without wearying. Now, all these things considered, my beloved, are you not carnal? I speak to the most of you,—Are you not those who are born of the flesh, since you mind nothing seriously, resolutely, constantly, and willingly, but the things of the flesh, and the things of this life? O it is no light matter to be born of the flesh! If you continue so, you are ordained for corruption, for death. “To be carnally minded is death,” ver. 6. of this chapter.

But I am persuaded better things of some of you, that the true light of God hath shined into your hearts, and revealed more excellent things unto you than these perishing fleshly things,—viz. heavenly, substantial, and eternal things in the gospel, which you account only worthy of the fixed and continued meditation of your spirits. I am sure, you perceive another beauty and excellency in these things than the world doth, because the Spirit hath revealed them unto you. It is true, that your minds are yet much darkened in the apprehension of spiritual things. They are not so willing to receive them, nor so ready to retain them as you desire. They are very unsettled and unsteady in the meditations of spiritual things, and there are innumerable thoughts of other things that pass through

your hearts, like common inns, uncontrolled at their pleasure. All this is true; but I am sure it is the grief of your souls, that your hearts are not so fixed and established as the excellency of these spiritual things requires. I know it will be the aim and real endeavour of any spiritual heart, to be shutting up all the entries and doors of the mind, that vain thoughts enter not. Yet enter they will, there are so many porches to enter in at, and our narrow spirits cannot watch at all. Every sense will let in objects, and imagination itself will be active in framing them, and presenting them. But yet the endeavour of a Christian will be, not to let them lodge long within, Jer. iv. 14. If they come in unawares, he will labour to make a diversion to a better purpose; and so still it holds good, that the current and course of a Christian's thoughts and cogitations are upon the things of the Spirit,—how to get his own heart washed and cleansed, how to be more holy and conformed to Christ, how to be at peace with God, and keep that peace unbroken, how to walk in obedience to God, and in duty towards men, how to forsake himself, and withal to deny himself in all these. I say, his most serious and solemn thoughts are about these things. His resolved and advised thoughts run most on this strain, though it be true, that, whether he will or not, other vain and impertinent, or not so concerning thoughts, will pass more lightly, and too frequently through his heart.

The other thing in which this spiritual life doth appear, is the current of the affections, or that relish and taste of the sweetness of the things of the Spirit, flowing from the apprehension of them in the mind. When the light is discovered indeed, (and, O it is a pleasant thing for the eye to behold it, as Solomon speaks!) then the Spirit hath found an object suitable to its nature, and so it relisheth and delighteth in it. Therefore the word is not simple minding, or thinking, but savouring,—thinking with affection upon them, tasting and feeding upon the knowledge of them. It is a minding of them with care and delight,

with earnestness, *φροειν*, "O taste and see how good the Lord is," Psal. xxxiv. 8. Some things cannot indeed be known but by some sense. You cannot make a blind man apprehend what light is, till he see it; a deaf man cannot form a notion of sounds in his mind, except he once heard them; neither can a man understand the sweetness of honey, but by tasting it. Truly spiritual things are of that nature,—there is some hidden virtue and excellency in them, which is not obvious to every man that hath the bare knowledge of the letter. There is a spirit and life in them, that cannot be transmitted into your ears with the sound of words, or infused into ink and paper. It is only the inspiration of the Almighty can inspire this sensible perception and real taste of spiritual things. Some powders do not smell till they be beaten. Truly till these truths be well powdered and beaten small by meditation, they cannot smell so fragrantly to the spirit. As meats do not nourish till they be chewed and digested, so spiritual things do not relish to a soul, nor can they truly feed the soul, till they be chewed and digested into the heart by serious and earnest consideration. This is that which makes these same truths to be some way not the same; these very principles of religion received and confessed by all, to be lively in one, and dead in another. It is the living consideration of living truth, the application of truth to the heart, that makes it lively in one; whereas others keep it only beside them in a corner of their minds, or in a book, in the corner of the house. The same meat is laid to you all. The most part look on it. Others contemplate it, and exercise only their understandings about it, but there are some who taste it, and find sweetness in it, who digest it by meditation and solemn avocation of their hearts from the things of the world; and therefore some are fed, some are starved.

Need we to enlarge much upon this subject? Is it not too palpable that many who fill up our churches, are in the flesh, because they do mind and savour only the

things of the flesh, and not of the Spirit? Will you seriously search your hearts,—ask what relishes most with them? Can you say, that it is “the kingdom of God, or the righteousness thereof?” Or, is it not rather those other things of food and raiment, and such like, that have no extent beyond this narrow span of time? I am persuaded the hearts of many taste no sweetness in religion, else they would fix more upon it, and pursue it more earnestly. Are not the things of another world, the great things of the gospel, counted all strange things, Hos. viii. 12,—as things that you have not much to do with? Do you not let the officers of Jesus Christ, all the sweet invitations of the gospel, pass by as strangers, and as if ye were unconcerned in them? What taste have they more than the white of an egg? How unsavoury a discourse or thought to a carnal heart is it, to speak of subduing the lusts of the flesh, of dying to the world, of the world to come? Who find their hearts inwardly stirred upon the proposal of Jesus Christ? But if any matter of petty gain were proffered, O how would men listen with both their ears! How beautiful in the eyes of the covetous mind is any gain and advantage! The sound of money is sweeter to him, than this blessed sound of peace and salvation. How sweet is pleasure to the voluptuous! What suitableness and conveniency is apprehended in these perishing things! But how little moment or weight is conceived and believed to be in things eternal! O how substantial do things visible seem to men, and how trifling do other things invisible appear! But for you, whose eyes are opened, to you Christ is precious, to you the things of the Spirit are beautiful, and all your grief is, that you cannot affect them according to their worth, or love them according to their beauty. I say, some there are who do see a substance and subsistence only in “things not seen,” Heb. xi. 1. And for things that are seen and visible in this world, they do account them shadows only in comparison of things invisible. The world apprehends no realities, but in what they see; but a Christian apprehends no solid reality in that

he sees, but only in that he sees not. And therefore as, in his judgment, he looks upon the one as a shadow, the other as a substance; so he labours to proportion and conform his affection to a suitable entertainment of them, to give a shadow or show of affection to the things of this life, but the marrow and substance of his heart is to the things invisible of another life. Thus the apostle, 1 Cor. vii. 30,—Rejoicing, as if we rejoiced not, enjoying, as if we possessed not, using, as if we used not,—half acts for half objects. If we give our whole spirits,—the strength of our souls and minds to them, we are as foolish as he that strikes with all his strength at the air, or a feather. There is no solidity or reality in these things, able to bottom much estimation or affection. Only mind them. and use them as in the by, as in passing through towards your country.

### XVIII.

Verse 5, 6.—For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

THERE are many differences among men in this world, that, as to outward appearance, are great and wide. And indeed they are so eagerly pursued, and seriously minded by men, as if they were great and momentous. You see what a strife and contention there 'is among men, how to be extracted out of the dregs of the multitude, and set a little higher in dignity and degree than they. How do men affect to be honourable above the base! How do they seek to be rich and hate poverty! These differences of poor and rich, high and low, noble and ignoble, learned and unlearned, the thoughts of men are wholly taken up with. But there is one great difference, that is most in God's eye, and is both substantial and eternal, and so infinitely surpasseth all these differences that the minds of

men most run out upon. And it is here,—the great difference between flesh and spirit, and them that are after the flesh, and them that are after the Spirit. This is of all other most considerable, because widest and most durable. I say, it is the widest of all, for all others put no difference between men as men. They do not reach the peculiar excellency of a man, that is, the true and proper good of his spiritual and immortal part. They are such as befall alike to good and bad, and so cannot have either much good or much evil in them. “I have seen folly set in great dignity, and princes walking on foot,” Eccles. x. 6, 7. Then certainly such titles of honour and dignity, such places of eminency, erected above the multitude, have little or nothing worth the spirit of a man in them, seeing a fool, a wicked man, is as capable of them as a wise man or a princely spirit. And so of all others,—they do not elevate a man, as a man, above others. A poor, unlearned, mean man, may have more real excellency in him, than a rich, learned, and great person. But this draws a substantial and vast difference indeed, such as is between flesh and spirit, such as is between men and beasts. You know what pre-eminency a man hath over a beast. There is no such wide distance among the sons of men as between the lowest and meanest man and the chiefest beast. “There is a spirit in man,” saith Elihu, Job xxxii. 8,—an immortal, eternal substance, of a far higher nature and comprehension. You know what excellency is in the spirit beyond the flesh, such as in heaven beyond the earth; for the one is breathed from heaven, and the other is taken out of the dust of the earth. The one is corruptible, yea, corruption itself, the other incorruptible. How swift and nimble are the motions of the spirit, from the one end of heaven to the other! How can it compass the earth in a moment! Do but look and see what a huge difference is between a beautiful living body, and the same when it is a dead carcase, rotten and corrupted! It is the spirit dwelling within that makes the odds, that makes it active, beautiful and comely. But on the removal

of the spirit, it becometh a piece of the most defiled and loathsome dust in the world.

Now, I say, such a vast and wide difference there is between a true Christian and a natural man,—even taking him in with all his common endowments and excellencies. The one is a man, the other a beast,—the one is after the flesh, the other after the Spirit. It is the ordinary compellation of the Holy Ghost, “Man being in honour, and understanding not, is like the beasts that perish,” Psalm xlix. 20. Psalm xciv. 8, “Understand, ye brutish among the people,” &c. Psalm xcii. 6, “The brutish man understands not this.” And Eccl. iii. 18, “That they themselves may know, that they are but beasts.” Therefore you find the Lord often turning to beasts, to insensible creatures, thereby to reprove the folly and madness of men, Isa. i. 2; Jer viii. 7. Man hath two parts in him, by which he hath affinity to the two most distant natures. He stands in the middle between angels and beasts; in his spirit he riseth up to an angelic dignity, and in his body he falls down to a brutish condition. Now, which of these hath the pre-eminency,—that he is. If the spirit be indeed elevated above all sensual and earthly things, to the life of angels, that is, to communion with God,—then a man is one after the Spirit,—an angel incarnate, an angel dwelling in flesh. But if his spirit throw itself down to the service of the flesh, minding and savouring only things sensual and visible,—then indeed a man puts off humanity, and hath associated himself to beasts, to be as one of them. And indeed a man made thus like a beast is worse than a beast, because he ought to be far better. It is no disparagement to a beast to mind only the flesh; but it is the greatest abasement of a man, that which draws him down from that higher station God had set him into, to the lowest station, that of beasts. And truly a Nebuchadnezzar among beasts is the greatest beast of all, far more brutish than any beast. Now such is every man by nature. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh.” Every man, as he comes out of the womb, is degen-

erated, and fallen down into this brutish estate, to mind, to favour, to relish nothing, but what relates to this fleshly or temporal being. The utmost sphere and comprehension of man is now of no larger extent than this visible world, and this present life. "He is blind, and seeth not far off," 2 Pet. i. 9. Truly, such is every man by nature; whereas the proper native sphere of the spirit's motion and comprehension is as large as its endurance, that is, as long as eternity, and as broad as to reach the infiniteness of God, the God of all spirits. Now, through the slavery and bondage of men's spirits to their flesh, it is contracted into as narrow bounds as this poor life in the flesh. He that ought to look beyond time, as far as eternity, and hath an immortal spirit given for that end, he is now half blind. The eye of the mind is so over-clouded with lusts and passions, that it cannot see far off,—not so far as to the morrow after death, not so far as to the entry of eternity. And truly, if you compare the context, you will find, that whosoever doth not "give all diligence to add to faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge temperance, to temperance patience, and to patience godliness," &c.; he that is not exercised and employed about this study,—how to adorn his spirit with these graces, how to have a victory over himself and the world, and in respect of these, accounts all things beside indifferent;—such a man is blind, and seeth not far off. He hath not gotten a sight of eternity. He hath not taken up that everlasting endurance;—else he could not spend his time upon provision for the lusts of the flesh, but he behoved to lay such a good foundation for the time to come, as is here mentioned. If he saw afar off, he could not but make acquaintance with those courtiers of heaven, which will minister an entrance into that everlasting kingdom. But truly, while this is not your study, you have no purpose for heaven you see nothing but what is just before your eye, and almost toucheth it. And so you savour and mind only what you see.

Is not this, then, a wide difference between the children



of this world and the children of God? Is it not very substantial? All others are circumstantial in respect of this. This only puts a real difference in that which is best in men, viz. their spirits. The excellency of nature is known by their affections and motions. So are these here: "The spiritual man savours spiritual things, the carnal man carnal things." Every thing sympathizes with that which is like itself, and is ready to incorporate into it. Things are nourished and preserved by things like themselves. You see the swine embraces the dunghill. That stink is only a savoury smell to them, because it is suitable to their nature. But a man hath a more excellent taste and smell, and he savours finer and sweeter things. Truly it cannot chuse, but that it must be a nature more swinish, or brutish than a swine, that can relish and savour such filthy abominable works of the flesh as abound amongst some of you. "The works of the flesh are manifest," Gal. v. 19. And indeed they are manifest upon you, acted in the very day time, out-facing the very light of the gospel. You may read them, and see if they be not too manifest in you. Now, what a base nature, what abominable and brutish spirits must possess men, that they apprehend a sweetness and fragrancy in these corrupt and stinking works of the old man! O how base a scent is it, to smell and savour nothing but this present world, and satisfaction to your senses! Truly your scent and smell, your relish and taste, argues your base and degenerate and brutish natures, that you are on the worse side of this division,— "after the flesh." But alas, it is not possible to persuade you that there is no sweetness, no fragrancy, nothing but corruption and rottenness, such as comes out of sepulchres opened, in all these works of the flesh, till once a new spirit be put in you, and your natures changed. No more than you can by eloquence persuade a sick man, whose palate is possessed with a vitiated bitter humour, that such things as are suitable to his vitiated taste, are indeed bitter; or make a swine to believe that the dunghill is stinking and unpleasant. Truly it is as impossible to make

the multitude of men apprehend, to relish or savour any bitterness or loathsomeness in the ways and courses they follow, or any sweetness and fragrancy in the ways of godliness, till once your tastes be rectified, your spirits be transformed and renewed.

And indeed, when once the spirit is renewed, and dispossessed of that malignant humour of corruption, and fleshly affection, that did present all things contrary to what they are,—then it is like a healthful and wholesome palate, that tastes all things as they are, and finds bitter bitter, and sweet sweet ; or like a sound eye, that beholds things just as they are, both in colour, quantity, and distance. Then the soul savours the sweet smell of the fruits of the Spirit, verse 22—“love, joy, peace, long-suffering, meekness, temperance,” &c. These are fragrant and sweet to the soul, and as a sweet perfume, both to the person that hath them, and to others round about him, and to God also. These cast a savour, that allures a soul to seek them, and being possessed of them, they cast a sweet smell abroad to all that are round about, and even as high as heaven. A soul that hath these planted in it, and growing out of it, is as a garden enclosed to God. These fruits are both pleasant and sweet to the soul that eats them, and as the pleasantness of the apple allured man to taste it and sin, so the beauty and sweetness of these fruits of the Spirit draw the spirit of a man after them. He hath found the savour, and seen the beauty, and this allures him to taste them, and then he invites the Well-beloved to come and taste also, to eat of these fruits with him. We might instance this in many things. A Christian relishes more sweetness in temperance, in beating down his body, and bringing it into subjection, in abstaining from fleshly lusts, than a carnal man tastes in the most exquisite pleasures that the world can afford. A Christian savours a sweetness in meekness and long-suffering. He hath more delight in forgiving, and forbearing, and praying for them that wrong him, than a natural man hath in the accomplishing of the most greedy desires of revenge. O what beauty hath gen-

tleness, goodness, and patience in his eye! What sweetness is in the love of God to his taste! How ravishing is the joy of the Holy Ghost! How contenting that peace which passeth understanding! These are things of the Spirit, that he minds and savours. Know, Christians, that it is to this ye are called,—to mind these things most, and to seek them most. Beware lest the deceitfulness of sin entice you, through the treacherous and deceitful lusts that are yet living in your members. If you indeed mind these things, and out of the apprehension of the beauty and savour of the sweetness, and smell of the fragrancy of them, would be content to quit all your corrupt lusts, for to be possessed with them, then you are on that blessed and happy side of this great and fundamental division of men. You have indeed the privilege of all others who are not renewed. Whatever be your condition in the world, you are of the Spirit; and this is better than to be rich, wise, great, and honourable. God hath not given you such things as the world go mad after. But envy them not; he hath given you better things, more real and substantial things, that make you far better and more excellent.

But then, this difference, as it is the widest, so it is the most durable. As it is substantial here, so it is perpetual hereafter. When all the other differences between men shall be abolished, this alone shall remain; and therefore you have it in the next verse, “to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.” This division that is begun here shall grow wider for all eternity. There shall be a greater difference after this life, and a more sensible separation. Death and life, eternal death and eternal life, are the two sides of this difference, as it shall shortly be stated. When all other degrees and distances of men shall be blotted out and buried in eternal oblivion, there shall no vestige or mark remain, of either wisdom, or riches, or honour, or such like, but all mankind shall be, as to these outward things, levelled and equalized. This one unseen and neglected difference in the world, shall appear and shine, “in that day when the Lord mak-

eth up his jewels. Then he will discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that feareth God, and him that feareth him not," Mal. iii. 18. The carnal and spiritual man have opposite affections and motions. The spirit of the one is on a journey or walk upward, after the Spirit, and the spirit of the other is on a walk downward, towards the flesh; and the further they go, the further distant they are. The one shall be taken up to the company of the spirits of just men made perfect, and to the fellowship of angels, the other shall be thrown down into the fellowship and society of devils. And truly it is no wonder it fall so low, for all its motions in the body were downward, to the fulfilling of the lusts of the flesh. Thus you see the difference will grow wider and more sensible than it is yet between the godly and ungodly. In this world it doth not so evidently appear, as it will do afterward. As two men, that leave one another, and have their faces on contrary airts, [i. e. in opposite directions,]—at the beginning the distance and difference is not so great and so sensible; but wait a little, and the further they go, the further they are distant, and the wider their separation is. Even so, when a Christian begins to break off his way from the common course of the world, it doth not appear to be so different from it, as to convince himself and others; but if his face be towards Jerusalem above, and his heart thitherward, certainly he will be daily moving further from the world, till the distance be sensible both to himself and others. He will be more and more transformed and renewed, till at length all be changed. No wonder then, that these two cannot meet together in the end of their course, whose course was so opposite. Though wicked men will desire to die the death of the righteous, yet it is no more possible they can meet in the end, than hell and heaven can be reconciled together, because they walk to two contrary points.

## XIX.

Verse 6.—For to be carnally minded is death ; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

It is true, this time is short, and so short, that scarce can similitudes or comparisons be had to shadow it out unto us. It is a dream, a moment, a vapour, a flood, a flower, and whatsoever can be more fading or perishing ; and therefore it is not in itself very considerable. Yet in another respect it is of all things the most precious, and worthy of the deepest attention and most serious consideration ; and that is, because it is linked unto eternity ; there is an indissolvable knot between them, that no power or art can break or loose. The beginning of eternity is continually united to the end of time ; and you know all the infinite extension of eternity is uniform, it admits of no change in it from better to worse, or worse to better ; and therefore the beginning of our eternity, whether it be happiness or misery, is but one perpetuated and eternized moment, so to speak. Seeing then, we are in the body, and sent unto the world for this end, that we may pass through into an unchangeable eternal estate ; truly, of all things it is most concerning and weighty, what way we choose to this journey's end : seeing the time is short, in which we have to walk, and it is uncertain too, we ought, as the apostle Peter speaks, to give all diligence : as long as the day remains, we should drive the harder, lest that eternal night overtake us. The shortness and uncertainty of time should constrain us to take the present opportunity, and not to let it slip over as we do. Seeing it is not at all in our hand, either what is past, or what is to come, —the one cannot be recalled, the other is not in our power, to call and bring forward,—therefore the present moment that God hath given us should be caught hold on, and redeemed, as the apostle speaks, Eph. v. 16. We should buy it at the dearest rate of pains and expenses, from all those vain, impertinent, and trifling diversions, that take

it up, that we may employ it as it becomes, suitable to eternity that is posting on. And then, as the shortness of it makes it the more precious and considerable, in regard of the end of it,—eternity; as the scantiness of a thing increases the rate of it, so that same consideration should make all worldly things, that are confined either in their being or use, within it, to be inconsiderable, as Paul, 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30, 31, shews, seeing the time is short, it remaineth, that we should rejoice, as not rejoicing; weep, as not weeping; buy, as if we possessed not; use the world, as not abusing it. Seeing all its worth is to be esteemed from the end of it,—eternity never ending; then certainly whatsoever in time doth not reach that end, and hath no connexion with it, we should give it but such entertainment, as a passing bird, that is pleasant to the eye, gets of a beholder, while it is in its flight. The shortness of the day should make us double our diligence, and put on the harder in our walk or race, that so we may come in time to our place of rest. And that same should make the passenger give an overly [i. e. superficial] and passing look to all things that are by the way, and which he must of necessity leave behind him.

Seeing these things, then, are so important, let us draw our hearts together to consider what the Lord speaks to us in this word, for in it you have two ways and two ends, opposite and contrary ways and walks, and as contrary ends. The ways are, walking after the flesh, and walking after the Spirit; the end to which they lead are, death and life. We spoke something of the ways, and the wide difference that is between them,—what excellency is in the one beyond the other. But truly it is hard to persuade you to leave off your accustomed ways and walks, because your inward sense, and the inclination of your hearts, is wholly perverted and corrupted by nature. You know the moving faculty is subordinate in its operations unto the knowing, feeling, and apprehending faculties. The locomotive power is given for a subsidiary and help to the

apprehensive and appetitive powers, because things are convenient and inconvenient, good or evil, to the nature of the living creature, without it; and it could not by mere knowledge, or desire, or hatred of things, either come into possession of them, or eschew them. Therefore God hath given them a faculty of moving themselves to the prosecution and attainment of any apprehended good, or to the eschewing and aversion of any conceived evil. Thus, when beasts savour or smell that food which is fit for them, their appetite stirs them up to motion after it, to obtain it. Now, I say, if this inward sense be corrupted, then things that are destructive will be conceived good, because they are suitable to that corrupt humour or quality that possesses the senses, and thus all the motion and walk will be disordered. The truth is, my beloved, our spirits and minds are infected with a poisonable humour. Fleshly passions and lusts are predominant naturally. And, as in them that are in a fever, their organs being distempere'd with a bitter unsavoury humour, the pleasantest things seem unsavoury, because not suitable to that predominant humour; even so it is with you by nature. That which puts all upon motion is out of course, since the first distemper of man. Your spirits and minds are fleshly and carnal. They have a strong and deep impression of all the lusts that are in the body, and are accordingly affected. And therefore you cannot fitly judge what is good or evil for you, but according to these, Isa. v. 20. You must call evil good, and good evil, bitter sweet, and sweet bitter, because you are already prepossessed thus. And therefore the ways of the flesh, those paths that lead to destruction, you cannot but look on them as pleasant, because they suit and please your corrupted sense or spirit. And so this disordered savour or smell of some fragrant perfume in the ways of the flesh, puts you upon walking in these ways; and being thus possessed and engaged, you cannot but stop your ears to all contrary persuasions. You think it against your sense and reason, to tell you that these are loath-

some and unsavoury, and that the other ways of wisdom and spirit are pleasantness and peace. I say, you cannot believe this, till your hearts and spirits be purged, and your taste be pure and uncorrupted. It is certainly upon this ground, that our Saviour puts such characters upon the way to heaven and hell, to life and death. The one is strait and narrow, and few walk in it; the other broad and easy, and many walk in it, Matt. vii. 13. Certainly, it is not the way in itself simply, that admits of such a motion,—to speak properly, as the thing is. The way to life, by the guiding of the Spirit, is easiest, plainest, shortest, and broadest. It hath all the properties of a good way—none so pleasant and plain. How sweet and pleasant sights all the way! It is an alley of delight. The way of his commandments—it wants not accommodation in it to refresh the traveller. The most delightful company is here. The Father and the Son, who sought no other company from all eternity, but were abundantly satisfied and rejoiced in one another. This fellowship the Christian hath to solace himself with, and he is admitted to be partaker of that joy. There is nothing that doth disburden the soul so of care and anxiety, nothing doth rid a man of so many perplexities and troubles as this way. But the way of sin in itself is most laborious, most difficult. It hath infinite by-ways that it leads a man into, and he must turn and return, and run in a circle all the day, all his time, to satisfy the infinite lusts and insatiable desires of sin. O how painful and laborious is it to fulfil the lust of the flesh! How much service doth it impose! How serious attention! What perplexing cares and tormenting thoughts! How many sorrows and griefs are in every step of this way! Do you not perceive what drudges and slaves sin makes you! how much labour you have to satisfy your lusts! And you are always to begin, as near that which you seek in the end of your years, as in the beginning. How thorny, how miry is the way of covetousness! Are you not always out of one thorn into another, and cut asunder, or pierced through with many



sorrows? 1 Tim. vi. 10; Matt. xiii. 22. Is that a pleasant and easy way, I pray you, that makes all your sorrow and your travel grief, and suffers not your hearts to take rest in the night? Eccl. ii. 22. 23. What pains of body! What plotting of mind! What labour and vexation of both must a sinner have as his constant attendants in this way! The way is intricate, deep, unpassable, that leads to that satisfaction you desire to your lusts. Your desires are impotent and impatient. The means to carry you on are weak and lame, noways accommodated or fit for such a journey. And this puts you always, as it were, on the rack, tormented between the impatience of your lusts, and the impotency of means, and impossibility to fulfil them. Desires and disappointments, hopes and fears, divide your souls between them. Such is the way after the flesh,—an endless labyrinth of woes and miseries, of pains and cares, ever while here.

But these ways receive such names from the common opinion and apprehension of men, because of our flesh, which is predominant. The way after the flesh being suitable to it, though in itself infinitely more toilsome, seems easy and plain; but the way after the Spirit seems strait, narrow, toilsome, and laborious. Though there be infinitely more room in the way to life, because it leads to that immense universal good,—it expatiates towards the all-fulness of God; yet to the flesh how narrow and strait is it, because it cannot admit of those inordinate lusts that have swelled so immeasurably towards narrow and scanty things! The true latitude of the way of the flesh is not great, for it is all inclosed within poor, lean, narrow, created objects. But because the imagination of men supplies what is wanting really, and fancies an infinite or boundless extent of goodness in these things; therefore the sinner walks easily, without straitening to his flesh,—it is not pinched in this way of fleshly lusts. But alas! the spirit is wofully straitened, fettered, and imprisoned, though it be not sensibly found.

What is the reason, then, that so many walk in the

way to death, but because their flesh finds no straitening, no pressure in it? It is an easy way to their natures, because suitable to the corruption that is in them; therefore men walk on without consideration of what follows. It is like a descent, or going down a hill, and so easy to our flesh. On the other hand, the way to life, after the Spirit, is an ascent upward, and it is very difficult to our earthy and lumpish flesh. Our spirits, by communion with, and subjection to the flesh, are made of an earthly quality, near the element of the flesh, and so they bow naturally downward. But if once they were purified and purged, and unfettered by the Spirit of God, and restored to their native purity, they would more easily and willingly move upward, as you see the flame doth. And till this be done in you, we cannot expect that you would willingly and pleasantly walk in these pleasant walks after the Spirit. Your walk will never be free and unconstrained in the paths of godliness. You may, from some external motives and impulses, move upward for a season, in some particular duties of religion, as a stone cast up. But as that impression is not from an inward principle, so it will not be constant and durable, but you will fall down to your old bias in other things, and move quite contrary, when the external impression of fear or favour, of custom or education, or such like, wears out. But the true Christian hath a spirit within him—the root of the matter in him. This carries him upward in the ways of obedience, after the motions and directions of God's Spirit. At the beginning, indeed, it is strait and uneasy to his flesh, but the difficulty is overcome, if once you begin well. The beginning, as you used to say, is the half of the whole. Truly, to be well entered, is half progress. Afterward the bulksome and burdensome lusts of the flesh are stript off, at least in a greater measure, and then the spirit moves easily and willingly. This walk becomes a recreation, that at first was a labour. Now delight and desire are as wings to mount the soul aloft. Now it is the good pleasure of the soul to walk to all well-pleasing. Indeed the

way of this world is dirty and filthy; and therefore a Christian had need to watch continually, and to gird up his loins, that his thoughts and affections hang not down to the earth, else they will take up much filth, and cannot but clog and burden the spirit, and make it drive heavily and slowly, as Pharaoh did his chariots when the wheels were off. We had need to fly aloft above the ground, and not to come down too low near it, thinking withal to double out our journey, for we shall find, because of the remnants of flesh within us, that this world hath a magnetical attractive virtue to draw us down to it, if we be within the sphere of its activity. It is not good coming near fire with flax; we should endeavour to keep our hearts at much distance, and disengage them from our lower consolations. This world is like the pestiferous lake of Sodom, that kills all that flies over it, and makes them fall down into it. If we fly low upon the surface of it, we cannot think but that the spiritual life will be much extinguished. But to prevent this, we would take our flight straight upward after the Spirit, (for that is the proper motion of the more pure and spiritual part of this world), and give no rest, till we be out of the reach of that infection,—till you be fully escaped the pollutions of the world.

But if you cannot be persuaded to come off this way, that seems so pleasant to your flesh, that way which is the very course of the world, (for these are joined, Eph. ii. 2.)—then I beseech you, stand still, and consider whither it will lead. Do but stop a little, and bethink yourselves sadly and seriously, whither this will take you,—where it shall end. And truly that is dreadful;—the end of it is death,—a never-ending death. I am sure, if you were walking by the way, and one came and told you gravely and seriously, that that way is full of dangerous pits, that there are many robbers in it, waiting to cut your throat, you would count the admonition worthy of so much notice, as to halt and consider what to do. But now, when the Lord himself, that deserves infinitely more respect and

credit than men, gives you warning once and often, day after day repeats this admonition to you, sends out many ambassadors to call you off, makes this word to sound daily in your ears, Oh! why will you die? such ways lead down to the chambers of death and hell; to be carnally minded, in the issue is death, whatsoever you may promise to yourselves: I say, when he makes a voice to accompany us in all our walkings,—This is not the way that leads to life; why do you not think it worthy of so much consideration, as once to stop and sist your progress, till you examine what will come of it? Are we so credulous to men, and shall not we believe God, who is truth itself, who affirms it so constantly, and obtests us so earnestly? Are we so wise and prudent in lesser things, and shall we be mad, self-willed, and refractory in the greatest things that concern us eternally? O unbelief is that which will condemn the world,—the unbelief of this one thing, that the walking after, and minding of the flesh is mortal and deadly! Though all men confess with their tongues this to be a truth, yet it is not really believed. The deep inconsideration and slight apprehension of this truth makes men boldly to walk, and violently to run on to perdition. Did you indeed believe that eternal misery is before you at the end of this way, would you be so cruel to yourselves, as to walk in it for any allurements that is in it? Did you really believe that there is a precipice into utter darkness and everlasting death at the end of this alley, would the pleasure and sweetness of it be able to infatuate you, and besot you so far as to lead you on into it, like an ox to the slaughter, and a fool to the correction of the stocks? It is strange indeed, though you neither will believe that death is the end of these things, nor yet can be persuaded that you do not believe it. There is a twofold delusion that possesses the hearts of men. One is, a dream and fancy of escaping death, though they live in sin; another is, a dream and fancy that they do believe that death is the wages of sin. We might wonder how they consist together, if we did not find it by so many experiences. Your

way proves that you do not believe it, that death is the end of it; and then your words evidence that you do not believe that you are unbelievers of that. O how desperate is the wickedness, and how great is the deceitfulness of the heart! The false prophet that is in every man's bosom deceives him, that it may destroy him. As Satan is a liar and a murderer, and murders by lying, so the heart of man is a self-murderer and a self-destroyer, and that is done by lying and deceiving. There is some lie in every sin, but there is this gross, black, fundamental lie at the bottom of all sin,—a conceit of immunity and freedom from death and hell; a strong imagination of escaping danger, even though such a way be chosen and walked in, as of its own nature inevitably leads to destruction. And there is something of this bloody murdering flattery even in the hearts of Christians; therefore this apostle gives us an antidote against it, and labours often to purge it out, by stirring up that knowledge they have received: "Know you not, that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?" 1 Cor. vi. 9. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for what a man soweth, that he shall reap. He that soweth to the flesh shall reap corruption." &c. Gal. vi. 7, 8. O that you might listen to this word, to this watchword given you, and stop your course, at least for a season, to think what shall be the latter end. Know you not, that such shall not inherit the kingdom? Know you not, that the way to heaven lies upward? Know you not that your way lies downward towards the flesh and the earth? Are you so far demented, as to think to come to heaven by walking just downward in the lusts of the flesh? Truly this is the strongest and strangest enchantment that can be, that you think to sow one thing and reap another thing; to sow darkness, and reap light; to sow corruption, and reap incorruption. Is that possible in nature, to sow nettle-seed, and think to reap barley or wheat? Be not deceived. O that you would undeceive your poor deluded souls, and know that it is as natural for death and hell to grow out of sin, and walking after the flesh, as it is for

every seed to yield its own fruit and herb! Do you then think to dissolve the course and order of nature? Truly the flesh is mortal in itself. It is ordained for corruption; you see what it turns to after the life is out. That is an emblem of the state of the fleshly soul after death. As you did abase your spirits to the service of the flesh here, and all your ploughing, and labouring, and sowing was about it; the seed which you did cast in the ground was fleshly lusts, earthly things, for the satisfaction of your flesh; so you shall reap of the flesh, corruption, death, and destruction, that shall make your immortal spirits mortal and corruptible, and subject them to death and corruption with the body, as far as they are capable. It shall deprive them of all that which is their proper life and refreshment, and separate them eternally from the fountain of blessedness, and banish them out of heaven unto the fellowship of devils. And O that corruption of the incorruptible spirit, is worse than the corruption of the mortal flesh,—*corruptio optimi pessima*.

Now, whoever of you is thus far undeceived, as to believe your danger and misery, and to discern that inbred delusion of your hearts, be not discouraged utterly. There may be hope of recovery, when you see your disease. I say, if you see that hell is at the end of your way, then know that he who sent that voice to call you off that way of death, leaves you not to your own wits to guide you into the right way, but follows with a voice behind you, saying, “here is the way, walk in it,”—turn not out of it to the right hand or to the left. And this voice sounds plainly in the word, and it is nothing else but the sound of the gospel, that blessed sound that invites and allures you to come in to Jesus Christ, the way, truth, and life, the true way to the true life. All other ways, all other lives, have no truth in them; it is but a cloud, a fancy, that men apprehend and lay hold on. But come to this way, and it will truly lead thee to the true life, eternal life; if you fly unto him out of the apprehension of your danger, you have a clear way to come to God, and as plain a way to

attain life and peace. Being in Christ, you have assurance of not falling into condemnation. He is such a way as will hold you in, and not suffer you to go out of it again to the way of death. And therefore he will give you a tutor, a guide and director in this way to life and peace, and that is the Holy Spirit, to lead in all truth, and to guide your feet in the way of his commandments; so that in this new and living way of Christ, you shall have both the light of the word to know where to walk, and life of the Spirit, to make you walk toward that eternal life; and thus “grace and truth is come by Jesus Christ.” Indeed you must suffer the mortification of your flesh, you must endure the pain of the death of your lusts, the cutting off your right hand, and plucking out your right eye, which would make you offend and stumble in the way; but let the remembrance of the life to come sweeten it all. When men undergo the hazard of losing life for a little pleasure, when, for a poor petty advantage, men will endure so much pains and trouble; O! how should eternal life,—and such a life as the best life here is but death to it;—how should it mitigate and sweeten the bitterness of mortification! How should it fortify our spirits to much endurance and patience! A battle we must have for these lusts that we disengage from the devil; and the world besides, will lay wait for us in this way; but when for such small and inconsiderable advantages, men will endure all the disadvantages of war, of a long war; O how should the expectation of this peace, which incloses and comprehends all felicity, all well-being, animate and strengthen us to fight into the city of life and peace eternal!

## XX.

Verse 7.—Because the carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

UNBELIEF is that which condemns the world. It involves in more condemnation than many other sins; not only

because more universal, but especially because it shuts up men in their misery, and secludes them from the remedy that is brought to light in the gospel. By unbelief, I mean not only that careless neglect of Jesus Christ offered for salvation, but that which is the root of that,—the inconsideration and ignorance of our desperate sinfulness and remediless misery without Christ: which not being laid to heart seriously, makes such slight and superficial entertainment of a Saviour and Redeemer. Man is truly miserable and unhappy, whether he know it or not. But truly it is an accession to his misery, that he knows it not, that he neither apprehends what he is now by nature, nor what he must shortly be made by justice. Indeed, if there were no remedy to be found, it were a happy ignorance to be ignorant of misery. The knowledge and remembrance of it could do nothing but add unto the bitterness of it. If a man might bury it in eternal forgetfulness, it were some ease. But now, when God hath in his mercy so appointed it, that the beginning of the belief of sin and misery shall in a manner be the end of misery; and seeing, whether men know it or not, they must shortly be made sensible of it, when there is no remedy to be found; then certainly it is the height of man's misery, that he knows and considers it not. If we would apply our hearts at length to hear what God the Lord speaks,—for he only can give account of man to himself,—we might have a survey of both these words and the preceding, of our desperate wickedness, and of our intolerable misery. For the present, by nature we are enemies to God, and shortly we must be dealt with as enemies,—as rebels to the most potent and glorious King, be punished with death, an endless living death. Experience shews how hard a thing it is to persuade you that you are really under sentence of death. You will not suffer your hearts to believe your danger, lest it interrupt your present pleasures of sin. Nay, you will flatter yourselves with the fancied hope of immunity from this curse, and account it a cruel and rigorous doctrine, that so many creatures made by



God should be eternally miserable, or a sentence of it should be past on all flesh. Now, that which makes us hardly to believe this, is the unbelief and deep inconsideration of your sinfulness; therefore the apostle, to make way for the former, adds, "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God." Do not wonder then that your ways and courses, your affections and inclinations, bring forth that ghostly and dreadful end of death, seeing all these are enmity to the greatest King, who alone hath the power of life and death. They have a perfect contrariety to his holy nature and righteous will. Not only is the carnal mind an enemy, but enmity itself; and therefore it is most suitable, that the sovereign power of that King of kings, be stretched out to the vindication of his holiness and righteousness, by taking vengeance on all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. If rebellion in a state or monarchy, against these petty mortal gods, who shall die as men, be so heinous as to deserve death, by the consent of all nations, how much more shall enmity and rebellion against the immortal, eternal King, who hath absolute right and dominion over his creatures, as over the clay, have such a suitable recompense of eternal death? Now, my beloved, if you once believed this, the enmity and opposition of your whole natures to God, you could not but fearfully apprehend what might be the issue of it. You could not bless yourselves as you do, and put the evil day far off; but certainly you would be affrighted with the terror and majesty of that God you have to do with, whom, when he awakes to judgment, you can neither resist nor escape; no standing against his wrath, and no flying from it out of his dominions; and this would dispose and incline your minds in time to hearken to the treaty of peace, which is holden out in the gospel, and to lay down the weapons of your enmity, and make peace with him in his Son, the Peace-maker.

Amity and unity is the very being and beauty of the world. This universe is made up of innumerable different kinds and natures, and all these climb and walk

together by the bond of peace and concord among themselves, and with that one high understanding that directs all, and supreme will of God that moves all. It is that link of union with God that gives and preserves being and beauty in all the creatures, as the dependence of the ray upon the sun, or the stream on the fountain, makes them what they are, which being interrupted, they cease to be what they were. "All things continue as thou hast ordained them, for all are thy servants," Psal. cxix. 91. You see then this amity and union of subordination of the creatures to God is not dissolved to this day. But woful and wretched man alone hath withdrawn from this subordination, and dissolved this sacred tie of happy friendship, which at first he was lifted up unto, and privileged with. Amity and friendship, you know, consists in an union of hearts and wills, and a communion of all good things. It makes two one, as much as two can be, by the conspiracy of their affections in one thing, and the joint concurrence of their endeavours to communicate to one another what each hath. It takes away propriety, and it makes a community between persons. Now, how happy was that amity!—how blessed that friendship between God and man! Though man's goodness could not extend to God, yet his soul united to God by love and delight, and all that God had given him, returning that to the proper owner, acknowledging his absolute dependence on him, and claiming interest and propriety in nothing, not in himself. And then on the other hand, the love and good-will of the infinite God placed on man, and from that fountain all the streams of happiness issuing forth towards man, the fulness of God opening up itself to him, and laying out itself towards him, God so far descending, as, in a manner, to become the creature's, to expose and dispose himself, and all in him, for poor man's use and comfort.

How joyful was that amity! But the breaking of this bond of peace is as sad and grievous. There was a woful interposal between God and us, which hath separated

these chief friends ever since the beginning, and that is sin, the seeds of all enmity and discord. This hath rent asunder the bond of amity; this hath made such a total aversion of the soul from God, and imprinted such an irreconcilable enmity in the heart against the holy will of God, that there is no possibility to re-unite them again, and restore the old friendship, as long as the soul is not quite changed and transformed. That first creation is so marred and defaced, that there is no mending of it till a second creation come. The carnal mind is not simply an enemy, but enmity itself. An enemy may reconcile again, and accept terms of peace, but enmity cannot reconcile to amity, without the very destruction of itself. The opposition of the heart is so perfect, that as soon may enmity unite with amity, and become one with it, as a carnal natural mind can submit to God's holy will. That which was at the beginning voluntary, is become necessary, and turned into the nature of an inbred antipathy, that no art can cure. The fall was such a disjointing of the soul from God, that no skill but infinite wisdom; no strength but Almighty power can set it right, and put it in the first posture again. It is true, there are not many who will openly and expressly denounce war against heaven. It is not so incident, that any man should have explicit plain thoughts of hatred against God. There are some common principles engraven by God in all men's minds, which serve as his witnesses against men,—that God should be loved, served, adored, and worshipped,—that there is nothing so worthy of the desires of the soul. Now, this general acknowledgment deludes the most part, for they take it for granted, that they do love God with their heart, because their consciences bear witness that they ought to love him, as if it were all one to know our duty, and to do it. Who is there but he entertains himself with this good opinion of himself, that his heart is good and true to God? For, say you, whom should I love, if I love not God? I were not worthy to live if I loved not him. It is true, indeed, that you say, but if

you did know your hearts, you would find their faces turned backward, and averted from God, and could no more please yourselves in such a confession of the truth, than the devil hath reason to think himself a believer, because he is convinced, that Christ is the Son of God, and confessed it too; no more than the Son that promised to go to the garden to work, and went not, had ground to think himself an obedient son, Matt. xxi. 30. Such a confession of duty may be extorted from damned spirits; and therefore you would not draw this veil over the wretched wickedness of your natures, to the end that you may conceive well of yourselves. It is so far from extenuating or excusing, that the very conviction of the great obligation to love and obey God is the greatest aggravation of the enmity. It is this which makes it the purest malice and most perfect hatred; that knowing the goodness of God, convinced of our bounden duty to love and serve him.—yet in the very light of such a shining truth, to turn our hearts away from him, and exercise all acts of hostility against him.

That you may know then, wherein the enmity of your hearts consists, I shall instance it in three branches or evidences. There is an enmity in the understanding, that it cannot stoop to believing of the truth; there is an enmity in the will, that it cannot subject to the obedience of God's holy commands; and this is extended also to a stubborn rebellion against the will of God, manifested in the dispensations of his providence. In a word, the natural and carnal mind is incapable of faith, of obedience, and of submission. There are many truths revealed in the Scripture, that the natural man cannot receive or know, for they are foolishness to him, 1 Cor. ii. 14. Some spirits there are lifted up above others, either by nature or education, in which this rebellion doth more evidently appear. Reason in them contends with religion, and they will believe no more than they can give a reason for. There is a wisdom in some men, that despiseth the simplicity, or the in-evidence of the gospel, and accounts

it foolishness. The carnal mind will needs start out from implicit trusting of God, when once it is possessed with some imagination of wisdom ; therefore how many are the insurrections of men's spirits against God's absolute power over the creatures ; against the mysteries of the holy Trinity and incarnation ; against the resurrection of our bodies ? In these and such like, the pretended wisdom of men hath taken liberty to act enmity, and to dispute against God. But truly, the rebellion and insubjection against the truth of God, is more generally practised, even by the multitude of men, though in an unfree hidden way. How few do believe their own desperate wickedness, though God hath testified it of man. Doth not every one apprehend some good to remain in his nature, and some power to good ? What an impossibility is it to persuade you, that all mankind are under the sentence of eternal condemnation ; that children, who have not done good or evil, are involved in it also ? Your hearts rise against such doctrines, as if they were bloody and cruel inventions. To tell you, that many are called, and few chosen ; that the most part of those who profess the truth, are walking in the way to hell, and shall undoubtedly fall into it ;—you may hear such things, but you bless yourselves from them, and cannot be persuaded to admit them into your minds. The hearts of men will be giving the very lie to the God of truth, when he speaks these things in his word. God forbid that all that be true ! If we should expound the law unto you, and shew you that the least idle word, the lightest thoughts, the smallest inward motion of the heart deserves eternal misery ; that anger is murder in God's sight ; that lusting is fornication ; that covetousness and love of the world is idolatry ; these things you cannot know or receive them. There are so many high imaginations in your minds, that exalt themselves against the knowledge of God ; so many thoughts that are mustered and set in battle array against the holy truths of God, that truly no weapons of human persuasion or instruction, can be able to cast down your misapprehensions and imaginations or the reasonings of your

hearts, or be able to scatter those armies of rebellious thoughts, and bring them into captivity, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. Man's darkened mind is a stronghold, that all the repeated and continued beatings of the word, the multiplying precept upon precept, and line upon line, cannot storm it, or make any true light shine into it. It is a dungeon, a pit so shut up and inclosed, no door nor window in it; so that, albeit the Sun of Righteousness shine upon it, and round about it, there is no beam of that light can enter into the hearts of many thousands. The generality are drowned as yet in a deluge of ignorance, under the very light of daily preaching. It is a night of as thick darkness within men's souls, as if there were no light about us. Certainly, this declares the height of enmity, the strength of the opposition. This prison of your minds is a stronghold, indeed, that is proof of all preaching or instruction; and, certainly, they will hold out, till Almighty power storm them, and beat or batter open some entry into your souls, to receive this shining light of the gospel.

Then, there is a rebellion of the will against God's holy will revealed in his law or word. It cannot be subject to the law of God. It neither is, nor can; for enmity and antipathy is sunk into its nature so, that it is the most deformed monstrous thing in the world. If the disfigured face of man's soul were visible, O how ugly were it! How would you loathe it! If there were a creature that could do nothing but hate itself, and sought its own destruction, that were a hateful enough object; but self-hatred and enmity is nothing so deformed and abominable, as for the creature's will to be set in opposition to the holy will of him that made it. It needs not much demonstration this, if you had but a little more consideration. Look back upon the tenor of your ways, set them beside the will and commands of God, and what find you? Whether agreement or disagreement? Take a view of the current of your inclinations and affections, and compare that with the holy will of God, and what find you? Friendship or enmity? You cannot digest the reproach of that, to be called enemies to God; but, I pray you,

consider if there be not as perfect contrariety in your desires, affections, inclinations, and actions, to the will of God, as if you did profess it. What would you do if you professed yourselves enemies to God? Could you possibly vent your enmity any other way than this, in withdrawing from the yoke of his obedience, in revolting from that allegiance you owe to him? You could wrong him no further than by setting your hearts and ways contrary to his heart and ways,—in loving what he hates, and hating what he loves, for his own blessed Being you could not impair it. Now, consider if that be not acted as really as if you did profess it. Can you say, that cursing, swearing, lying, railing, anger, strife, envy, revenge, and such like works of darkness, are the things which his soul loves? Are these suitable to his holy will? And yet these are your inveterate customs, to which your natures are so inured and habituated, that you can no more forsake them than hate yourselves. Are filthiness, drunkenness, sabbath-breaking, covetousness, and love of the world,—are these his delight? And yet these are your delight. Again, is it not his will that ye should purge yourselves from all filthiness of flesh, of spirit, and perfect holiness? Is not righteousness that which he loves, and truth in the inward parts? Doth not he look to a contrite heart, and account that a savoury sacrifice? Is it not his royal statute and commandment, of which not one jot shall fail, that ye should deny yourselves, love your enemies, forgive them that offend you, sanctify his name always in your hearts, and especially on the holy Sabbath? That ye should watch unto prayer, be sober in the use of the world, be much in watching for his second coming again? Now, what repugnance is in your hearts and ways to all these? Do not the conversations of men display a banner against the gospel, and proclaim as much in reality, as is said in words, in Psalm ii. 3, “Let us cast his cords behind us, and cut his bands?” These things are unsavoury unto you, you smell nothing pleasant in them; but only in the puddle of the world, in running at random, at your own liberty, after your own

imaginations ; that you account only liberty. O ! when shall your hearts be subdued, and your affections brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ ? When shall you be delivered up to the truth ; and so made to obey from the heart, that form of doctrine and sound words, Rom vi. 17. This is the strongest hold that Satan has in man's heart,—his will and affections ; and this keeps out longest against Jesus Christ, till he that is stronger come and bind the strong man, and cast out the enmity, and make all captive to his loving obedience and willing subjection, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5.

Then, thirdly, the enmity of the soul of man is acted in his rebellion against the will of God manifested in his works, in his unsubmission and unsubmitive disposition towards the good pleasure of the Lord, in carving out such a lot in the world. It is certain, that as the will of God is the supreme rule of righteousness, so it is the sovereign cause and fountain of all things ; and therefore, how infinitely is the creature bound to be subject to him as a lawgiver, by pleasant and willing obedience to his righteous and reasonable commands ; and to submit to him as the absolute ruler, by quiet and humble condescendence to all the dispensations of his providence ! Now, you know, if you know anything of yourselves, how cross and opposite these hearts of yours are to his good pleasure ;—how they are set just contrary. And whence flow all murmurings, grudgings, discontents, griefs, cares, and perplexities of men, but from this fountain,—the rebellion of the heart against God ? There is nothing in all the creation mutinous and malecontent, but the heart of man. You see frequent examples of it in the murmurings of the people in the wilderness. It is frequently styled,—a tempting of the Lord, Exod, xvii. 2, importing a high provocation of his holy Majesty ; a special incitement, as it were, and motive to declare his absolute power and righteousness against such ; and therefore these are often conjoined, Psalm lxxviii. 17, 18—“They sinned yet more, by provoking the most



High: and they tempted God in their hearts ;” and it is added, verse 19, “ yea, they speak against God.” Wherein you may observe a gradation of aggravations of this enmity. When men have already deserved infinite punishment at his hand, and may always look within, and find an answer to all the murmurings of their hearts, as having sinned so often against him ;—yet then, to rise up against his good pleasure ; and after we have so often sinned, to repine at any thing coming from him,—this certainly is a high provocation of the most high God. It puts a kind of necessity upon him to inflict that which thou indeed deservest. And then, this inward heart-burning against God, it breaks out often in words against that most high and holy One; for—ver. 40, 41, and ver. 56, 57.—provoking, which is the plain expression of murmuring, in the margin is rendered, “rebellious against him:” and so in verse 8, when a short account is given of them, when the character or anagram of such a people is expressed, it is set down thus, “a stubborn and rebellious generation.” Therefore Paul considered this woful and wretched posture of the soul, set in opposition to the always blessed will of God, and the madness and folly of it, exhorts us, “neither murmur ye, as some of them murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer; for these things happened for ensamples,” &c. 1 Cor. x. 10, 11. Truly, there is nothing, either more deformed and vile in itself, or more disquieting and tormenting to the soul, or more dangerous in the consequences of it, than such a posture of spirit, a discontented humour against God’s providence,—whether it be in withholding that good thing from us which we desire, or sending that which crosseth our humour; whether sickness, or want, or reproach, or disrespect; whatsoever it be that the heart is naturally carried to pursue or eschew. What more abominable and ugly visage, than the countenance of an angry and furious person? But when this is against God, it adds infinitely to the deformity and vileness of it. “I do well to be angry,” is the motto of a discontented soul.

It erects an imaginary sovereignty against true Sovereignty. It sets up on anti-providence; it establisheth another divine power and wisdom, and brings the majesty, highness, and holiness of God down to be trod upon by the creature. And then it is its own tormentor, a sin that needs no punishment but itself. The insurrection and mutiny of the heart against God's will, sets all the powers of the soul out of course, vexes, pains and disquiets all. There is no peace and tranquillity but in the complacency of the heart with God's heart; as "Ephraim was like a bullock unaccustomed with the yoke," Jer. xxxi. 18. The more he fretted and spurned at his yoke, the more it galled him and grieved him, till he was instructed, and then he was eased. This fills the soul with hideous tormenting thoughts and cares. This feeds upon its own marrow, and consumes it, as some have made the emblem of envy, which is a particular kind of this enmity: as if you would imagine a creature that did waste and consume all its moisture and marrow, and feed upon the destruction of itself. Now, this is but the prelude of what follows; this self-punishment is a messenger to tell what is coming, that the most high God is engaged in his power against such a person, and shall vent his displeasure to their eternal displeasure;—that is the fruit of this enmity.

## XXI.

Ver. 7, 8.—The carnal mind is enmity against God: For it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

It is not the least of man's evils, that he knows not how evil he is; therefore the Searcher of the heart of man gives the most perfect account of it, Jer. xvii. 9, "The heart is deceitful above all things," as well as "desperately wicked." Two things superlative and excessive in it, bor-

dering upon an infiniteness, such as sin is capable of.—wickedness and deceitfulness! And indeed, that which makes the wicked heart desperately and hopelessly so, is the deceitfulness of it. There are many specious coverings gotten to palliate this wickedness and enmity, and so many invisible and spiritual wickednesses in the heart, that it is no wonder that they lurk and dwell without observation. Sin is either covered with some deceivable pretext of another thing, or altogether escapes the dim eyes of men, because of its subtle and spiritual nature. Both are in this business. The enmity of man's heart against God is so subtle a thing in many, and it is shrouded over with some other pretences in all, that few get the lively discovery and sense of it. It is true, it is very gross and palpable in the most part of men,—visible, I mean, upon them, though not to themselves. Any whose eyes are opened, may behold the black visage of rebellion in the most part of the actings and courses of men, as the apostle, Gal. vi. speaks, "the works of the flesh are manifest." Truly this enmity against God is too manifest in most part, the weapons of your warfare against God being so carnal and visible too, and your opposition to his holy will and ways being so palpable. There is an enmity acted by many in the tenor of their conversation, without God in the world, and against God; as appears in all your inveterate and godless customs of lying, swearing, cursing, drunkenness, railing, sabbath-breaking, neglect of prayer, and such like; which carry in their forebrow this inscription, "against the known God," opposite to that of the Athenians' altar. The God whom you pretend to know and worship, his name is every day blasphemed, his word slighted, his will disobeyed, as if you had proclaimed war against him. But there is in some (and I fear a great many) not only an acted but an affected enmity too,—enmity rising up to the maturity and ripeness of malignity and hatred of the image of God, in all his children. Some are not willing to go to heaven, yet they do not disturb others in their journey; they can let others be re-

ligious about them, and really desire to be like them. But others there are, who will neither enter into heaven themselves, nor let others enter, as Christ speaks of the Pharisees, Matt. xxiii. 13. They hate the light of another's conversation, because their own deeds are evil, and are re-proved and condemned by it. It is said, Rev. xi. 10, "The witnesses tormented them that dwelt on the earth." It is strange, what a torment it is to the world, that the godly are in it! Piety is an eye-sore to many. If they could extirpate all that bear that image, they would think it sweet as bread, Psal. xiv. This is a more open and declared enmity against the God of heaven; and yet I know it lurks under the mask of some other thing. You pretend to hate hypocrisy only. Alas! what a scorn is it for profanity to hate hypocrisy! Sure it is not because it is a sin, but for the very shadow of piety it carries. You hate the thing itself so perfectly, that you cannot endure the very picture of it. Do not deceive yourselves,—the true quarrel is, because they run not to the same excess of riot with you. If they will lie, cozen, defraud, swear, and blaspheme as other men, you could endure to make them companions, as you do others; and the principle of that is, the enmity that was placed in the beginning. That mortal irreconcilable feud betwixt the two families, are two seeds of Christ and Satan.

But, as I told you, this enmity acts in a more subtle and invisible way in some, and it is painted over with some fair colours, to hide the deformity of it. Not only the grosser corruptions of men carry this stamp; but take even the most refined piece or part in man,—take his mind, take the excellency of his mind, even the wisdom of it; yet that hath enmity incorporated into it, and mixed with it throughout all; for the wisdom of the flesh is enmity with God, as it may be read, *ωρωνημα*, the very prudence and reason of a natural man, which carries him to a distance from, and opposition with, the common defilements in the courses of men; yet that hath in its bosom a more exquisite and refined enmity against God; and so

the more spiritual and purified it be from grosser corruptions, it is the more active and powerful against God, because it is, as it were, the very spirit and quintessence of enmity. You see it, 1 Cor. i. how the wisdom of God is foolishness to the wisdom of the world; and then again, that the wisdom of the world is the greatest folly to the only wise God. Men that have many natural advantages beyond others, are at this great disadvantage,—they are more ready to despise godliness, as too base and simple a thing to adorn their natures. As Christ said of rich men, it may be said of wise men, of learned men, of civil and blameless persons, who have a smooth carriage before the world, “how hard is it for such to enter into the kingdom of heaven!” Hard indeed! for they must be stript naked of that, ere they can enter through this narrow gate,—I mean the opinion and conceit of any worth or excellency,—and so diminished in their own eyes, that they may go through this needle’s eye without crushing.

The stream of enmity runs under ground often, and so hides itself under some other notion, till at length it burst forth openly. I find it commonly runs in the secret channel of amity or friendship to some other thing opposite to God. So James iv. 4, “The amity of the world is enmity with God;” 1 John ii. 15, “He that loveth the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” There are two dark and under-ground conduits, to convey this enmity against God, amity to the world, and amity to ourselves, self-love, and creature-love. We cannot denounce war openly against Heaven, but this is the next course,—to join to, or associate with, any party that is contrary to God. And thus, under the covert of friendship to ourselves, and love to the world, we war against God, and destroy our own souls. I say first, amity to the world carries enmity to God in the bosom of it: and if you believe not this, hear the apostle’s sharp and pungent question, “You adulterers and adulteresses, know you not that the amity of the world is enmity with God?” He doth not speak only to persons guilty of that crime, but to all natural men, who

are guilty of adultery or whoredom of a more spiritual nature, but as abominable and more dangerous. There is a bond and special tie betwixt all men and God their maker, which obligeth to consecrate and devote themselves, their affections and endeavours, to his honour, especially when the covenant of the gospel is superadded unto that, in which Jesus Christ our Lord reveals himself, as having only right to us and our affections; as willing to bestow himself upon us; and notwithstanding of all the distance between him and wretched sinners, yet filling it up with his infinite love and wonderful condescendency, demitting himself to the form of a servant, out of love, that so he might take us up to be his chaste spouse, and adorn us with his beauty. This he challengeth of us, whoever hear and profess the gospel. This is your profession, if ye understand it, that Jesus Christ shall be your well-beloved, and ye his; that ye shall separate yourselves to him, and admit no stranger in his place; that the choice and marrow of your joy, love and delight, shall be bestowed on him. Now, this bond and tie of a professed relation to that glorious husband, is foully broken by the most part, by espousing their affections to this base world. Your hearts are turned off him unto strangers, that is, present perishing things: whereas the intendment of the gospel is, "to present you to Christ as pure virgins," 2 Cor. xi. 2. Truly your hearts are gone a-whoring after other things. The love of the world hath withdrawn you, or kept you in chains; these present things are as snares, nets, and bands; "as an harlot's hands and heart," Eccl. vii. 26. They are powerful enchantments over you, which bewitch you to a base love, from an honourable and glorious love. O that you would consider it, my beloved, what opposition there is betwixt the love of the world and the love of the Father; betwixt amity to that which hath nothing in it, but some present bait to your deceitful lusts, and amity to God, your only lawful husband! Affection is a transforming and conforming thing,—*Si terram amas terra es*. The love of God will purify thy heart, and lift it up to more simili-

tude to him whom thou lovest; but the love of the world assimilates it unto the world, makes it such a base and ignoble piece as the earth is. Do you think marriage affection can be parted? "My well beloved is mine;" therefore the church is the turtle, the dove to Christ, of wonderful chastity. It never joins but to one, and after the death of its marrow, it sighs and mourns ever after, and sits solitary. You must retire, my beloved, and disengage from the love of other things, or you cannot love Christ; and if you love not Christ, you cannot have peace with the Father; and if you have not that peace, you cannot have life. This is the chain of life; the first link begins at the divorcement of all manner of loves and beloved idols. Once the soul must be loosed in desire and delight, and that link must be fastened upon the most lovely and desirable object, Christ, the desire of the nations: and this draws along another link of peace and life with it. Do not mistake it,—religion would not hinder or prejudice your lawful business in this world;—O, it were the most compendious way to advance it, with more ease to your souls! but certainly it will teach you to exchange the love of these things for a better and more heart-contenting love.

Then, amity to ourselves is enmity to God; and truly this is the last stronghold that holds out longest against God, when others may be beaten down or surrendered. Possibly a man may attain to this, to despise these lower things, as below his natural dignity and the excellency of his spirit. Some may renounce much of that friendship with worldly and temporal things, as being sordid and base; but the enmity gets into this strong and invisible tower of darkness.—self-love and pride; and therefore the apostle John makes this the last and chiefest, "the pride of life," 1 John ii. 16. When the lusts of the eyes and flesh are in some measure abated, this is but growing; and what decreaseth of these, seems to recresce unto this: as if self-love and pride did feed and nourish itself upon the ashes or consumption of other vices. Yea, it draws

sap from graces and virtues, and grows thereby, till at length it kills that which nourished it. And indeed the apostle James seems to proceed to this, verse 5, 6, when he minds us that "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Doth the Scripture say this in vain?" saith he. Is not self-amity as well enmity as the amity of the world? And therefore God opposeth himself unto it, as the very grand enmity. Self is the great lord, the arch-rebel, the head of all opposition,—that in which they do all centre; and when all the inferior soldiers are captives, or killed, this is last in the field;—it lives first in opposition, and dies last, *primum vivens, et ultimum moriens*. When a man is separated from many things, yet he may be but more conjoined to himself, and so the further disjoined from God. Of all those vile rags of the old man, this is nearest the skin, and last put off: of all the members, self is the heart,—first alive, and last alive. When enmity is constrained to render up the outward members of the body, to yield them to a more smooth and fair carriage, to a civil behaviour; when the mind itself is forced to yield unto some light of truth, and knowledge of the gospel; yet the enmity retires into the heart, and fortifies it the stronger, by self-love and self-estimation. As in winter, the encompassing cold makes the heat to combine itself together in the bowels of the earth, and by this means the springs are hotter than in summer; so the surrounding light of the gospel, or education, or natural honesty, drives the heat and strength of enmity inward, where it fortifies itself more. This is that accursed antiperistasis, that is made by the concurrence of some advantages of knowledge and civility, and such like.

The blood of enmity against God gets in about the heart, when it is chased for fear out of the outward man: therefore, the first and fundamental principle of Christianity is, "let a man deny himself, and so he shall be my disciple." He must become a fool in his own eyes, though he be wise, that he may be wise, 1 Cor. iii. 18. He must become as ungodly, though godly, that he may be justifi-



ed by faith, Rom. iv. 5. He must forsake himself, that he may indeed find himself, or get a better self in another. He must not eat much honey, that is not good;—it would swell him, though it be pleasant. He must not search his own glory, or reflect much upon it, if he would be a follower and friend of Christ. Look, how much soever you engage to yourselves esteem, or desire to be esteemed of others, to reflect with complacency on yourselves, to mind your own satisfaction and estimation in what you do, so much you disengage from Jesus Christ, for these are contrary points. It is a direct motion towards Christ; it is an inverse and backward motion towards ourselves; and so much as we move that way, we promote not, but lose of our way, and are further from the true end. Ezekiel's living creatures may be an emblem of a Christian's motion,—“he returns not as he goes,” he makes a straight line to God, whithersoever he turn him. But nature makes all crooked lines, they seem to go forth in obedience to God, but they have a secret unseen reflection into its own bosom. And this is the greatest act of enmity, to idolize God, and deify ourselves. We make him a cypher, and sacrifice to ourselves. His peculiar incommunicable property, of Alpha and Omega,—that we do sacrilegiously attribute to ourselves, the beginning of our notions, and end of them too. This is the crooked line, that nature cannot possibly move out of, till a higher Spirit come, and restore her that halted, and make plain her paths.

That which is added, as a reason, explains this enmity more clearly; “because it cannot be subject,” &c. Truly these two forementioned amities of the world and of ourselves, do withdraw men wholly from the orderly subjection that they owe to the law of God. Order is the beauty of every thing, of nature, of art, of the whole universe, and of the several parts, kingdoms, and republics of it. This, indeed, is the very beauty of the world,—all things subordinate to him that made them. Only miserable man hath broken this order, and marred this beauty,

and he cannot be subject, *οὐχ ὑποτασσεται*, cannot come again into that orderly station and subordination he was once in. This is the only gap or breach of the creation; and it is some other engagements that draw him thus far out of course—the base love of the world, and the inordinate love of himself. O these make his neck stiff, that it cannot bow to the yoke of obedience! These have opposite and contrary commands, and no man can serve two masters. When the commands of the great lord, self, come in opposition with the commands of God, then he cannot be subject to the law of God. For a time, in some things, he may resemble a subjection, when the will of self, and the will of God command in one point, as sometimes they do by accident: but that is neither frequent nor constant.

Not only he is not subject, but there is worse in it, he cannot be subject to the law of God. This is certainly to throw down the natural pride of man, that always apprehends some remanent ability in himself. You think still to make yourselves better, and when convinced or challenged for sins, to make amends, and reform your lives. You use to promise these things as lightly and easily as if they were wholly in your power, and as if you did only delay them for advantage; and truly, it seems this principle of self-sufficiency is engraven on men's hearts, when they procrastinate and delay repentance and earnest minding of religion to some other fitter season, as if it were in their liberty to apply to it when they please. And when you are urged and persuaded to some reformation, you take in hand, even as that people, Jer. xlii. 6, 20, who said, "all that the Lord hath said, we will do." You can strike hands, and engage to serve the Lord, as easily as that people in Joshua xxiv. 18, 19. But we may say, "Oh, that there were such a heart in you!" but, alas, such a heart is not in you! You cannot serve the Lord, for he is holy and jealous, and ye are not only weak but wicked. I beseech you then, believe this one testimony that God hath given of man, even the choicest

thing in man, the very wisdom of a natural man, it is not subject to God's law, and it cannot be better, neither can it be subject. Resolution, industry, vows, and covenants will not effect this, till the Most High break and bow the heart. And not only has this enmity against the old law of commandments an antipathy at them, as crossing our lusts, but even against the new and living law of the spirit of life in Christ.

Here is your misery,—you can neither be subject to the law as commanding to obey it, or threatening for disobedience to it, nor to the gospel, as promising to believe and receive it. The law commands, but your law countermands within. The law threatens and sentences you with condemnation, but you have some self-pleasing delusion and dream in your heads, and bless yourselves in your own hearts, even though ye walk in the imagination of your hearts, contrary to the law, Deut. xxix. It is strange that you do not fore-apprehend and fear hell. But it is this delusion possesses the heart, “you shall not die.” It was the first act of enmity, not only the transgression of the command, but unbelief of the truth for the curse; and that which first encouraged man to sin, encourages you all to lie in it and continue in it,—a fancy of escaping wrath. This noise fills the heart,—Satan whispers it in the ear.—go on, you shall not die. Thus it appears, that the natural mind cannot be subject to the law of God; no persuasion, no instruction, can enforce this belief of your damnable condition upon you.

But then, when the enmity is beaten out of this fort, and a soul is really convinced of its desperate and lost estate; when the heart is brought down to subjection, to take with that dreadful sentence; yet there is another tower of enmity in the heart, that can keep out against the weapons of the gospel, such as Paul mentions, Rom. x. 3. Being ignorant of the righteousness of God, they went about to establish their own and could not submit to the righteousness of God. There is a natural pride and stiffness of heart, that we cannot endure but to have some-

thing in ourselves to rest on, and take pleasure in ; and when a soul sees nothing, it rather vexes and torments itself, as grieving because it hath no ornament or covering of its own, nor rejoiceth and delighteth in that righteousness of God revealed in Christ. O the difficulty to bow down so low, as to put on another's righteousness over our nakedness ! And should it be called submission ? Is it not rather the elevating and exalting of the soul ? Yet in respect of our natural posture of spirit, it is a matter of great difficulty to make a self-condemned sinner submit to this, to be saved freely, without money or price, by another's ransom. What empty, vain, and frivolous expiations and satisfactions will souls invent, rather than trust all to this. How long will poor souls wander abroad from hill to mountain, seeking some inherent qualification to commend them, and leave this garden and paradise of delights, which is opened up in Christ ! Souls look every where for help, till all hands fail ; and then necessity constrains them to come hither. But, indeed, necessity brought in charity, and amity keeps in, when once he knows what entertainment is in Christ. As for you, who as yet have not stooped to the sentence of wrath, how will you submit to the righteousness of God ? But I wonder how you imagine this to be so easy a thing to believe ? You say, you did always believe in Christ, and that your hearts are still on him, and that you do it night and day. Now, there need no other argument to persuade that you do not at all believe in the gospel, who have apprehended no more difficulty in it ; no more contrariety to your rebellious natures in it. Let this one word go home with you, and convince you of your unbelief, " the natural mind is not subject to the law of God, neither, indeed, can it be." How then do you come so easily by it ? Certainly it must be feigned and counterfeit.

## XXII.

Verse 8.—So then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

It is a kind of happiness to men, to please those upon whom they depend, and upon whose favour their well-being hangs. It is the servant's happiness to please his master; the courtier's to please his prince: and so generally, whosoever they are that are joined in mutual relations, and depend one upon another. That which makes all pleasant, is this, to please one another. Now, certainly, all the dependencies of creatures one upon another, are but shadows unto [*i. e.* in comparison with] the absolute dependance of creatures upon the Creator,—for “in him we live, and move, and have our being.” The dependence of the ray upon the sun, of the stream upon the fountain, is one of the greatest in nature; but all creatures have a more necessary connexion with this fountain-being, both in their being and well-being. They are nothing but a flux and emanation of his power and pleasure, and, as the Psalmist expresseth it, he hides his face, and they are troubled, he takes away their breath, and they die, and return to their dust. He sends forth his Spirit, and they are created; and he renews the face of the earth, Psal. civ. 29, 30. You may extend this to the being and well-being, the happiness and misery of creatures. Our souls which animate our bodies are but his breath which he breathed into the dust, and can retract when he pleaseth. The life of our souls, the peace, and tranquillity, and satisfaction is another breathing of his Spirit, and another look of his countenance, and as he pleases to withdraw it, or interpose between his face and us, so we live or die, are blessed or miserable. Our being or well-being hath a more indispensable dependence on him, than the image in the glass hath upon the living face.

If it be so, then, certainly of all things in the world, it concerns us nearest how to please him, and to be at peace

with him. If we be in good terms with him, in whose hands our breath is, and whose are all our ways, Dan. v. 23; upon whose countenance our misery or felicity hangs, then certainly we are happy. If we please him, it matters not whom we displease; for he alone hath absolute, uncontrolled, and universal power over us, as our Saviour speaks,—over both soul and body. We may expect that his good pleasure towards us will not be satisfied, but in communicating his fulness, and manifesting his favour to us, especially since the goodness of God is so exundant, as to overflow even to the wicked world, and vent itself as out of superabundance, in a river of goodness throughout the whole earth. How much more abundantly towards them whom he is well-pleased with; and therefore the Psalmist cries out, as being already full in the very hope and expectation of it, that he would burst, if he had not the vent of admiration and praise, “O how great is his goodness, and how excellent his loving kindness laid up for them that fear him!” Psal. xxxi. 19; and xxxvi. 7. But, on the other hand, how incomparable is the misery of those who cannot please God, even though they did both please themselves and all others for the present. To be at odds with him, in whom alone they can subsist, and without whose favour is nothing but wretchedness and misery, O that must be the worst and most cursed estate imaginable! To be in such a state, as, do what they can, they cannot please him, whom alone to please is of only concernment, what can be invented to that? Now, if you ask who they are that are such;—the words speak it plainly. in way of inference from the former doctrine, “therefore they that are in the flesh cannot please God.” Not they in whom there is flesh; for there are remnants of that in the most spiritual man in this life. We cannot attain here to angelic purity, though it should be the aim and endeavour of every Christian. But “they that are in the flesh, or after the flesh,” imports the predomination of that, and an universal thralldom of nature unto it, which, indeed, is the state of all men that are but once born, till a second birth come, by the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

The ground of this may be taken from the foregoing discourse, and it is chiefly twofold ; one is, because they are not in Jesus Christ, in whom his soul is well pleased ; another is, because they cannot suit and frame their carriage according to his pleasure. Since all mankind hath fallen under the displeasure of the most high God, by sinning against him, in preferring the pleasure of the flesh, and the pleasure of Satan, to the pleasure of God, there can be no atonement found to pacify him, no sacrifice to appease him, no ransom to satisfy his justice, but that one perfect offering for sin, Jesus Christ, the propitiation for the sins of the elect world. This the Father accepts, in the name of sinners ; and in testimony of his acceptance, he did two several times, by a voice from heaven, declare, first to a multitude. Matt. iii. 17, and then to the beloved disciples, Matt. xvii. 5, and both times with great majesty and solemnity, as did become him,—that this is his well-beloved Son, in whom his soul is well-pleased. It pleased God to make the stream of his love to take another channel after man's sin, and not to run immediately towards wretched man ; but he turned the current of his love another way, to his own Son, whom he chose for that end, to reconcile man, and bring him into favour ; and his love going about, by that compass, comes in the issue towards poor sinners, with the greater force. He hath appointed Christ the meeting-place with sinners, the daysman to lay his hand on both ; and therefore he is God to lay his hand on God, and man to lay his hand on man, and bring both into a peaceable and amicable conjunction. Now then, whoever are not in Jesus Christ, as is spoken, ver. 1, certainly they cannot please God, do what they can ; because God hath made Christ the centre, in which he would have the good pleasure of sinners meeting with his good pleasure ; and therefore, “ without faith it is impossible to please God,” Heb. xi. 6, not so much for the excellency of the act itself, as for the well-pleasing object of it, Christ. The love of the Father is terminated in him—his justice is satisfied in him. His

love is well pleased with the excellency of his person,—he finds in him an object of delight, which is nowhere else ; and his justice is well pleased with the sufficiency and worthiness of his ransom: and without this compass, there is neither satisfaction to the one nor to the other. So then, whatsoever you are—how high soever your degree in the world—how sweet soever your disposition, let your natures be never so good, your carriage never so smooth ; yet certainly there is nothing in all this, that can please God, either by an object of love, or a price for justice. You are under that eternal displeasure, which will fall on and crush you to pieces. Mountains will not be so heavy as it will appear in that great day of his wrath, Rev. vi. I say, you cannot come from under that imminent weight of eternal wrath, unless you be found in Jesus Christ, that blessed place of immunity and refuge, if you have not forsaken yourselves and your own natures, and denied your own righteousness as dung, to be found in him, clothed with his righteousness and satisfaction. If the delight and pleasure of your soul do not coincide and fall in at one place with the delight and good pleasure of the Father, that is, upon his well-beloved Son, certainly the pleasure and good will of God hath not as yet fallen upon you, and met with you. Therefore, if you would please God, be pleased with Christ ; and you cannot do him a greater pleasure than believe in him, John v. 23, that is, absolutely resign yourselves unto him for salvation and sanctification.

The other ground is,—Such as are in the flesh cannot frame their spirits, affections, and ways to God's good pleasure ; for their very wisdom, the very excellency that is in them, is enmity to God, and cannot be subject to his law ; and therefore they cannot please him. I am sure, you may easily reflect upon yourselves, and find, not with much search, but upon all these, as the prophet, Jer. ii. 34, speaks, that it is not the study and business you have undertaken to please God ; but the bent and main of your aims and endeavours is to please yourselves, or to



please men. This makes many men's pains, even in religion, displeasing to God; because they do not indeed mind his pleasure, but their own or others' satisfaction. What they do, is but to conform to the custom of the time, or commandments of men, or their own humour: and all this must needs be abominable to God. Truly, that which is in great account among men, is an abomination to God, as our Saviour speaks of the very righteousness and professed piety of the Pharisees, Luke xiv. 25; the more you please yourselves and the world, the further you are from pleasing God. The very beginning of pleasing God, is, when a soul falls in displeasure at itself, and abhorrence of its own loathsomeness. Therefore it is said, the humble and contrite spirit I will look unto, and dwell with him, and such sacrifices do please God, Isa. lxvi. 2; Psal. li. 17. For the truth is, God never begins to be pleasant and lovely to a soul till it begins to fall out of love with itself, and grow loathsome in its own eyes. Therefore you may conclude this of yourselves, that with many of you God is not well pleased, although you be all baptized unto Christ, and do all eat of that same spiritual meat, and drink of that same spiritual drink. Though you have all church privileges, yet with many of you God is not well pleased, as 1 Cor. x. 2—5, not only because these works of the flesh that are directly opposite to his known will, such as fornication, murmuring, grudging at God's dispensation, cursing and swearing, lying, drunkenness, anger, malice, strife, variance, and such like, abound as much among you as that old people; but even those of you that may be free from gross opposition to his holy will, your nature hath the seed of all that enmity, and you act enmity in a more covered way. You are so well pleased with yourselves, your chief study is to please men. You have not given yourselves to this study, to conform yourselves to the pleasure of God; therefore know your dreadful condition,—you cannot please God, without whose favour and pleasure you cannot but be eternally displeased and tormented in yourselves. Cer-

tainly, though now you please yourselves, yet the day shall come that you shall be contrary to yourselves, and all to you, as it is spoken as a punishment of the Jews, 1 Thess. ii. 15. And there are some earnest of it in this life. Many wicked persons are set contrary to themselves, and all to them. They are like Ishmael, their hand against all, and all men's hands against them; yea, their own consciences continually vexing them. This is a fruit of that fundamental discord and enmity between men and God; and if you find it not now, you shall find it hereafter.

But as for you that are in Jesus Christ, who, being displeased with yourselves, have fled into the well beloved, in whom the Father is well pleased, to escape God's displeasure; I say unto such,—your persons God is well pleased with in Christ, and this shall make way and place for acceptance to your weak and imperfect performances. This is the ground of your peace and acceptance; and you would take it so, and it shall yield you much peace, when you cannot be pleased with yourselves. But I would charge that upon you, that as you, by believing, are well pleased with Christ, so you would henceforth study “to walk worthy of your Lord unto all well-pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God,” Col. i. 10. This is that to which you are called, to such a work as may please him, to conform yourselves even to his pleasure and will. If you love him, you cannot but fashion yourselves so as he may be pleased. O how exact and observant is love of that which may ingratiate itself in the Beloved's favour! It is the most studious thing to please, and most afraid of displeasing. Enoch had a large and honourable testimony as ever was given to man, “that he pleased God,” Heb. xi. 5. I beseech you be ambitious of this after a holy manner. Labour to know his will, and that for this end, that you may approve it, and prove it, that you may do that good and acceptable will of God. Let his pleasure be your rule, your law, to which all within you may conform

itself. Though you cannot attain an exact correspondence with his pleasure, but in many things you will offend; yet certainly this will be the resolved study of your hearts—how to please him; and in as far as you cannot please him, you will be displeased with yourselves. But then, I would advise you, in as far as you are displeased with yourselves for not pleasing God, be as much well pleased with Christ, the pleasing sacrifice and atonement; and this shall please God as much as your obedience could do, or your disobedience can displease him. To him be praise and glory.

### XXIII.

Ver. 9.—But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

APPLICATION is the very life of the word, at least it is a necessary condition for the living operation of it. The application of the word to the hearts of hearers by preaching, and the application of your hearts again to the word by meditation, these two meeting together, and striking one upon another, will yield fire. Paul speaks of “a right dividing of the word of truth,” 2 Tim. ii. 15, not that ordinary way of cutting it all in parcels, and dismembering it by manifold divisions, which I judge makes it lose much of its virtue, which consists in union, though some have pleasure in it, and think it profitable. Yet I do not see that this was the apostolic way,—that either they preached it themselves, or recommended it to others. But rather he means the real distribution of the food of souls unto their various conditions, as it is the duty of a steward to be both faithful and wise in that,—to give every one his own portion. And as it is the pastor’s duty thus to distribute the word of God unto you, so it is your part to apply it home to yourselves, without which application, the

the former division of the word aright will not feed your souls. If every man act not the pastor to his own heart it cannot profit. Now indeed, the right application of the word to souls is the difficultest part of preaching, and it is the hardest point of hearing; in which there needs both much affection and much direction, the one to be serious and earnest in it, the other to be wise and prudent in it. Without suitable affection, it will not pass into the substance of the soul to feed it, no more than the stomach can digest meat that wants convenient heat; and without discretion and wisdom, to chuse our own portion, it will not yield convenient food, but increase humours and superfluities, or distemper our spirits. That which I look at in these words is, the discretion and prudence of this wise steward in God's house. After he hath represented the wretched and woful estate of those "that are in the flesh," how their natures cannot but act enmity against God, how their end is death and destruction, he subjoins in due season a suitable encouragement to believers, "you are not in the flesh," &c. Because there is no man so sensible of that corruption that dwells within, as he that is in part renewed; as pain to a healthful body is most sensible, and as the abundance of light makes a larger discovery of what is disordered and defiled in the house; therefore such, upon the hearing of the accursed estate of men in nature, of their natural rebellion against God, and God's displeasure against them,—they are most ready, I say, to apply such things to themselves, to the weakening of their own hands, and saddening of their hearts, even as the upright-hearted disciples were more ready to take with the challenge of betraying Christ, than the false-hearted Judas. Therefore the apostle prevents such an abuse of the doctrine, by making application of the better part unto the Romans; but for you, "ye are not of the flesh," &c. Indeed, self-examination is necessary, and it is like the chewing of the meat before it be sent into the stomach, it is as necessary and precedent before right application. I wish that every one of you would consider well

what this living word concerns you. It is the ground of all our barrenness ; no man brings this home to himself, which is spoken to all : but truly the Lord speaks to all, that every man may speak to himself, and ask at his own heart, what is my concernment in it? what is my portion? As for you whom the Lord hath put upon this search of yourselves, and hath once made you to find yourselves in the black roll of perdition, under the hazard of the eternal weight of God's displeasure, and there hath shewed unto your souls a way of making peace with God, and a place of refuge in Jesus Christ, which hath sometimes refreshed and eased your hearts, and only was able to purify your consciences, and calm the storms that did arise in them ; if it be henceforth your study to walk to please him, and this engagement be on your hearts, to make no peace with the flesh and corruption that dwells in you, then, I say, the Lord calls and accounts you not carnal but spiritual. Though there be much carnality in you, yet he denominates from the better part, not from the greatest part,—“you are not after the flesh but after the Spirit.” Though Isaac be a weak young child, and Ishmael, the son of the bond-woman, be a strong man ; yet thou art in God's account esteemed according to the promise, which shall be the ground of thy stability. Isaac must abide in the house for ever, and grow stronger and stronger, and Ishmael must be cast out, and grow weaker and weaker. The one is ordained for destruction, and so is called the old man, drawing near to its grave ; the other for life, and so is a new man, renewed day by day. Thus they are in God's promise, and you would learn thus to look upon it, not according to their present inequality in strength, but that future inequality and difference, which is wrapt up in the promise of God, and the seed whereof is in you.

As there is a woful penury and scantiness of examination in the most part of men, who are wholly spent without, and take no leisure to recognize their own souls ; so there is a miserable excess, and hurtful superfluity of examination and disputation among many of God's chil-

dren, who are always in reflection, and almost never in action ;— so much on knowing what it is, that they take not much leisure to do or pursue what is not. Truly, I think, when the apostle commands us to examine whether we be in the faith, and prove ourselves; he did not mean, to make it our perpetual exercise. or so to press it, as we should not endeavour to be in the faith, till we know whether we be in it. That were no advancing way, to refuse to go on in our journey, till we know what progress we have made, as the custom is. But simply and plainly, I think, he intended to have Christianity begin at examination, as the first returning of a soul must needs be upon some inquiry and search of the way, and knowledge, upon search, that our former way was wrong,—and this is only right. But if this be the porch to enter in at, will you sit down and dwell in it, and not go on into the palace itself? Because you must begin to search what you have learned wrong, that now you may unlearn it, will you be ever about the learning to know your condition; and by this means never attain to the knowledge of the truth? But when you have, upon any inquiry, found yourselves out of the way, you should not entertain that dispute long, but hearken to the plain voice of the gospel that sounds unto you, “This is the way, walk ye in it.” “I am the way,” saith Christ,—enter at me, by believing in me. Now, once having found that you are unbelievers by nature,—to suspend believing, till you prove whether you be in the faith, is unreasonable and impossible; for certainly having once found yourselves void of it, you must first have it, before you know that you have it. You must first apply to action, and afterward your examination shall be more easy.

But I would tell a more profitable improvement of such representations of the sinful and miserable estate of the ungodly world, than you use to make of it. And, I think, it is that the apostles intend, in the frequent turning the eyes of saints about to the accursed state of the world; partly consolation, and partly some provocation to suitable walking. Things that are opposite are best

known by comparison one with another : each of them casts abroad a light to see the other by. Therefore it is that the apostles do frequently remind the converted Gentiles of the wretched estate the world lies in, and themselves once were in. You see it, 1 Cor. vi. 11, " And such were some of you ; but now you are washed." And, Eph. ii. 1, " You who were dead in sins hath he quickened." There is not any thing will more commend unto a Christian the grace of God towards him, than to look abroad round about him, and take a view of the whole world lying in wickedness ; and then to look backward to what himself once was, and compare it with what the free grace of God hath made him. O what a soul-ravishing contemplation is that ! 1 John v. 19, " And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in wickedness." How doth this heighten the price of grace, and how much doth it add to a soul's inward contentment, to think what it was of itself, and what it would undoubtedly have been, if not thus wonderfully surprised ! One used always to look to those below him, that he might not envy those above him. Truly it might do well here, when a Christian is grieved and disquieted, because he hath not attained to that desired measure of the image of God, and fellowship with him, to cast a look about him to the miserable and hopeless estate of so many thousands, who have the image of Satan so visibly engraven on them, and have no inward stirring after this blessed image : and reflect a little backward, to the hole of the pit whence he was taken, to look upon that primitive estate that grace found him in, so loathsome, as described Ezek. xvi. Would not such a double sight, think you, make him break out in admiration, and be powerful to silence and compose his spirit ? O to think that I was once in that black roll of those excluded from the kingdom ! Such were some of you ; and then to consider, that my name was taken out, and washed by the blood of Christ, to be enrolled in the register of heaven. What an astonishing thing is it ! You see in nature, God hath appointed contrarieties and

varieties to beautify the world; and certainly, many things could not be known how good and beneficial they are, but by the smart and hurt of that which is opposite to them; as you could not imagine the good of light, but by some sensible experience of the evil of darkness. Heat, you could not know the benefit of, but by the vexation of cold. Thus he maketh one to commend another, and both to beautify the world. It is thus in art, contrariety and variety of colours and lines make up one beauty: diversity of sounds make a sweet harmony. Now, this is the art and wisdom of God, in the dispensation of his grace,—he setteth the misery of some beside the happiness of others, that each of them may aggravate another. He puts light beside darkness, spirit fore-against flesh, that so saints may have a double accession to their admiration at the goodness and grace of God, and to their delight and complacency in their own happiness. He presents the state of men out of Christ, that you may wonder how you are translated, and may be so abundantly satisfied, as not to exchange your portion for the greatest monarch's.

Then, I say, this may provoke us, and persuade us to more suitable walking. Doth he make such a difference? O do not you unmake it again! Do not confound all again, by your walking after the course of the world. Conformity to the world is a confusion of what God hath separated; his infinite grace translated you from that kingdom of darkness to light. O then walk in that light, as children of light? Are you such? Own your stations; consider your relations, and make yourselves ashamed at the very thoughts of sin. He points out the deformed and ugly face of the conversation of the world, that you may fall in love with the beauty of holiness, as the Lacedemonians were wont to let their children see their slaves drunk, that the brutish and abominable posture of such in that sin might imprint in the hearts of their children a detestation of such a vice. Certainly, the Lord calls you to mind often what you have been, and what the world about you is; not to engage you to it, but to alienate your minds from



the deformity of sin, and to commend to you the duty of obedience. You would learn to make this holy use and advantage of all the wickedness the world lieth in,—to behold in it, as in a glass, your own image and likeness; that when you use to hate or despise others, you may rather loathe and dislike yourselves, as having that same common nature; and wonder at the goodness of God, that makes such difference, where none was. This were the way to make gain of the most unprofitable thing in the world, that is, the sins of other men; for ordinarily the seeing and speaking of them doth rather dispose us and incline us to more liberty to sin. Many look on them with delight, some with contempt and hatred of those that commit them, but few know how to speak or look on sin itself with indignation, or themselves, because of the seeds of it within them, with abhorrency. I would think, if we were circumspect in this, the worse the world is, we might be the better; the worse the times are, we might spend it better; the more pride we see, it might make us the more humble; the more impiety and impurity abound, it might provoke us to a further distance from, and disconformity with the world. Thus, if we were wise, we might extract gold out of the dung-hill, and suck honey out of the most poisonous weed. The surrounding ignorance and wickedness of the world might cause a holy antiperistasis in a Christian, by making the grace of God unite itself, and work more powerfully, as fire out of a cloud, and shine more brightly, as a torch in the darkness of the night.

As for you, whose woful estate is here described, who are yet in the flesh, and enemies to God by nature, I would desire you to be stirred up at the considerations of this,—that there are some who are delivered out of that prison, and that some have made peace with God, and are no more enemies but friends, and fellow-citizens of the saints. If the case were left wholly incurable and desperate, you have some ground to continue in your sins and security; but now when you hear a remedy is possible, and some have been helped by it, I wonder that

you do not, upon this door of hope offered, bestir yourselves, that you may be those who are here excepted,—but you are not in the flesh. Since some are, why may not I be? Will you awake yourselves with this alarm! If you had any desire after this estate, certainly such a hope as this would give you feet to come to Jesus Christ; for these are the legs of the soul,—some desire of a better estate, and some probability of it conceived by hope.

## XXIV.

Verse 9.—If so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

BUT will God in very deed dwell with men on earth! 2 Chron. vi. 18. This was the wonder of one of the wisest of men: and indeed, considering his infinite highness above the height of heavens; his immense and incomprehensible greatness, that the heaven of heavens cannot contain him; and then the baseness, emptiness, and worthlessness of man, it may be a wonder to the wisest of angels. And what is it, think you, the angels desire to look into, but this incomprehensible mystery, of the descent of the Most High to dwell among the lowest and vilest of the creatures. But as Solomon's temple, and those visible symbols of God's presence, were but shadows of things to come, the substance whereof is exhibited under the gospel; so that wonder was but a shadow or type of a greater and more real wonder,—of God's dwelling on the earth now. It was the wonder,—shall God dwell with man, among the rebellious sons of Adam! But behold a greater wonder since Christ came,—God dwelling in man, first personally in the man Christ, in whom the fulness of the godhead dwelt bodily, then graciously in the seed of Christ in man by his Spirit; and this makes men spiritual, “if so be the spirit of Christ dwell in you.” You heard of the first indwelling, ver. 3, “God sending his own Son in the likeness

of sinful flesh," the inhabitation of the divine nature in our flesh, which had the likeness of sinful flesh, but without sin; for he sanctified himself for our cause. And truly, this mysterious and wonderful inhabitation is not only a pledge of the other, that God shall dwell in sinful men by his Spirit; but, in order of nature, it hath some influence upon the other, without which God could not have dwelt in us. There is so much distance and disproportion between his majesty and us, that we could not be well united, but by this intervening,—God coming down first a step into the holy nature of the man Christ, that from thence he might go into the sinful nature of other men. Our sinful and rebellious nature behoved to be first sanctified this way,—by the personal indwelling of God in our flesh; and this had made an easy passage into sinful us, for his Spirit to dwell in us powerfully and graciously; therefore the Spirit of Christ is said to dwell in us. "Christ's Spirit," not only because proceeding from him as from the Father; but particularly, because the inhabitation or operation of the Spirit in us is the proper result and fruit of that glorious union of our nature with him. He took our flesh, that he might send us his Spirit. And, O what a blessed exchange was this! He came and dwelt in our nature, that so he might dwell in us. He took up a shop, as it were, in our flesh, that he might work in us, and make us again conformed to God.

We shall not cut this asunder into many parts. You see the words contain plainly the very essential definition of a spiritual man, and of a Christian. You find a spiritual man and a Christian equivalent in this verse; that is to say, they are taken for one and the self-same thing, and so they are reciprocal, of equal extent and restraint. Every Christian is one after the Spirit, and whosoever is after the Spirit is a Christian. One of Christ's, and one after the Spirit, is one thing. Now the definition of the Christian is taken from that which really and essentially constitutes him such,—he is one in whom the Spirit of Christ dwells. That makes him one after the Spirit; that

makes him one of Christ's, because it is the Spirit of Christ. As if you define what a man is, you could not do it better than thus,—he is one endowed with a reasonable soul. So the apostle gives you the very soul and form of a Christian, which differenceth from all others. As the soul is to the body to make up a man, so the Spirit of Christ is to the soul and spirit of a man to make up a Christian. As the absence or presence of the soul makes or unmakes a man, so the absence or presence of this Spirit makes or unmakes a Christian, for you see he makes it reciprocal. If you be Christians, the Spirit dwells in you, but if the Spirit dwell not in you, you are not Christians.

A word then to the first of these, That a Christian and a spiritual man are commensurable one to another. It is true, there are Jews who are not Jews inwardly, but only according to the letter, Rom. ii. 28, 29. And so there are Christians so called, who are but so outwardly and in the letter, who have no more of it but the name and visible standing in the church. But we are speaking of that which is truly that which it is called, “whose praise is not of men but of God.” The name of a man may be extended to a picture or image, for some outward resemblance it hath of him, but it is not a proper speech; no more is it proper to extend the name of Christians unto the pictures or images of Christians, such as are destitute of this inward life. You may be properly, according to Scripture phrase, members of the visible body; but you cannot have that real and blessed relation to Jesus Christ the head, which shall be the source of happiness to all the living members. I wish you would take it so, and flatter yourselves no more with church-titles, as if these were sufficient evidences for your salvation. You would all be called Christians; but it fears me you know not many of you the true meaning and signification of that word; the most comfortable sense of it is hid from you. The meaning of it is, that a man is renewed by Christ in the spirit of his mind. As Christ and the Spirit are inseparable, so a Christian and a spiritual nature are not to be found

severed. Certainly, the very sound of the name whereby you are called imports another nature and conversation than is to be found in many. You cannot say, that you have a shadow of spirituality either in your affections or actions; or that you have any real design and study that way, but only to please your flesh, and satisfy the custom of the world. Why do you then usurp the name of Christianity? This is a common sacrilege, to give that which is holy unto dogs. Others give it to you, and you take it to yourselves. But know, that though you please yourselves and others in this, yet without such a renovation of your natures, and such a sincere study to be inwardly and outwardly conformed to the profession and name of Christianity, you have not your praise of God, and him whom God praises not and allows not, he cannot bless for ever. I am persuaded, there are some who are not only in the letter, but in the Spirit, whose greatest desire and design is, to be indeed what they profess; and such is their praise of God, and if God praise them now, they shall be made to praise him for ever hereafter. Such are allowed to take the name and honourable style of Christianity unto them. You are Christ's, nearly interested in him: and if you be Christ's own, he cannot be happy without you; for such was his love, that he would not be happy alone in heaven, but came down to be miserable with us. And now that he is again happy in heaven, certainly he cannot enjoy it long alone, but he must draw up his members unto the fellowship of that glory.

Now the other thing, that which gives even being to a Christian, is, "the Spirit of Christ dwelling in him." Of this inhabitation, we shall not say so much as the comparison, being strained, will yield, neither expatiate into many notions about it. I wish rather we went home with some desires kindled in us, after such a noble guest as the Holy Spirit is, and that we were begun once to weary of the base and unclean guests that we lodge within us, to our own destruction. That which I said, that the Spirit is to a Christian what the soul is to a man, if well con-

sidered, might present the absolute necessity and excellency of this unto your eyes. Consider what a thing the body is without the soul, how defiled and how deformed a piece of dust it is, void of all sense and life, loathsome to look upon.

Truly the soul of man by nature is in no better case, till this Spirit enter. It hath no light in it, no life in it; it is a dark dungeon, such as is described, Eph. iv. 18. "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts." You have both in that word darkness and deadness, want of that shining light of God in the mind, so that it cannot discern spiritual things, that makes to our eternal peace. All the plainness and evidence of the gospel, though it did shine as a sun about you, cannot make you see or apprehend either your own misery, or the way to help it, because your dungeon is within; the most part cannot form any sensible notion of spiritual things, that are daily sounding unto them in the word. The eye of the mind is put out, and if it be darkness, how great is that darkness! Certainly the whole man is without light, and your way and walk must be in the dark. And indeed it appears, that it is dark night with many souls, because, if it were not dark, they could not run out all their speed among pits and snares in the way to destruction. And from this woful defect flows the alienation of the whole soul from the life of God: that primitive light being eclipsed, the soul is separated from the influence of heaven; and as Nebuchadnezzar's soul acted only in a brutal way, when driven out among beasts; so the soul of man, being driven out from the presence of the Lord, may act in a way common to beasts, or in some rational way in things that concern this life, but it is wholly spoiled of that divine life of communion with God. It cannot taste, smell, or savour such things. O! if it were visible unto us,—the state of the ruinous soul,—we would raise a more bitter lamentation over it than the Jews did over Jerusalem, or the kings and merchants have reason to do over fallen Babylon.

Truly we might bemoan it thus, "how is the faithful city become a harlot, righteousness lodged in it, but now murderers," Isa. i. 21. Man was once the dwelling-place of princely and divine graces and virtues. The Lord himself was there, and then how comely and beautiful was the soul! But now it is like the desolate cities, in which the beasts of the desert lie, and their houses are full of doleful creatures, where owls dwell, and satyrs dance, where wild beasts cry, and dragons in the pleasant places, Isa. xiii. 21, 22, and Jer. l. 39. So mighty is the fall of the soul of man, as of Babylon, that it may be cried, "it is fallen, and become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird," Rev. xviii. 2. All the beasts flock now to it, all the birds of darkness take their lodging in it, since this noble guest left it, and took away the light from it; for the sun hath not shined on it since that day. All unclean affections, all beastly lusts, all earthly desires, all vain cogitations get lodging in this house; the Bethel is become a Bethaven, the house of God become a house of vanity, by the continued repair of vain thoughts. The house of prayer is turned into a den of thieves and robbers. That which was at first created for the pure service and worship of God, is now a receptacle of all the most rebellious and idolatrous thoughts and affections; the heart of every man is become a temple full of idols.

This is the state of it, and worse than can be told you: now, judge if there be not need of a better guest than these. O what absolute necessity is there of such a Spirit as this, to repair and reform the ruinous spirit of man, to quicken and enlighten the darkened mind of man! Even that Spirit, that made it at first a glorious palace for God; that Spirit that breathed the soul into the formed clay, must repair these breaches and create all again. Now, when the Spirit of Christ enters into this vile and ruinous cottage, he repairs it, and reforms it; he strikes out lights in the heart, and, by a wonderful eye-salve, makes the eyes open to see. He creates a new light within, which

makes him behold the light shining in the gospel; and behold all things are new,—himself new, because now most loathsome and vile; the world new, because now appears nothing but vanity in the very perfection of it; and God new, because another majesty, glory, excellency, and beauty shines into the soul, than ever it apprehended. And as the Spirit enlightens, so he enlivens this tabernacle or temple. He kindles a holy fire in his affections, which must never go out. It is such as cannot be kindled if it go out, but by the beams of the sun, as the poet fancied the vestal-fire. The Spirit within the soul is a fire to consume his corruption, to burn up his dross and vanity. Christ comes in like a refiner, with the fire of the Spirit, and purges away earthly lusts, and makes the love of the heart pure and clean, to burn upward toward heaven. This Spirit makes a Christian soul move willingly toward God in the ways that seemed most unpleasant. It is an active principle within him that cannot rest, till it rests in its place of eternal rest and delight in God. And then the Spirit reforms this house, by casting out all those wild beasts that lodged in it, the savage and unruly affections that domineered in man. This strong man entering in, casts them out. There is much rubbish in old waste palaces, Neh. iv. 2. O how much pains is it to cleanse them! Our houses are like the houses of those nobles, Jer. v. 27, “Full of deceit, as a cage is full of birds, and our hearts full of wickedness and vanity.” Jer. iv. 14. Certainly it will be much labour to get your unclean spirits cast out, that is, the grosser and more palpable lusts that reign in you; but when these are gone forth, yet there is much wickedness and uncleanness in the heart, of a more subtle nature, and, by long indwelling, almost incorporated and mingled with the soul; and this will not be gotten out with gentle sweeping, as was done, Luke xi. 25. That takes away only the uppermost filth that lies loosest; but this must be gotten out by much washing and cleansing; and therefore the Spirit enters by blood and water. There are idols in the heart, to which



the soul is much engaged ; it unites and closes with them, Ezek. xxxvi ; and these must be cleansed and washed out. There is much deceit in the heart, and this lies closest to it, and is engrossed in it. And indeed this will take the help of fire to separate it ; for that is of the most active nature to separate things of a diverse nature. The Spirit must by these take out your dross. And all this the Spirit will not do alone, but honours you with the fellowship of this work ; and therefore you must lay your account, that the operation and reformation of this house, for so glorious a guest, will be laborious in the mean time. But O how infinitely is that compensated ! One hour's fellowship with him alone, when all strangers are cast out, will compensate all, will make all to be forgotten. The pain of mortification will be swallowed up in the pleasure of his inhabitation : " When I shall awake I shall be satisfied with thy likeness." When he shall take up house fully in you, it will satisfy you to the full. In the mean time, as he takes the rule and command of your house, so for the present he provides for it, the provision of the soul is incumbent on this divine guest. And O how sweet and satisfying is it ! O the peace and joy of the Holy Ghost, which are the entertainment that he gives a soul, where he reigns, and hath brought in righteousness ! Rom. xiv. 17. What a noble train doth the Spirit bring alongst with him, to furnish this house ! Many rich and costly ornaments hang over it, and adorn it, to make it like the king's wife, " all glorious within ;" such as the ornament " of a meek and quiet spirit," 1 Pet. iii. 4, which is a far more precious and rich hanging, than the most curious or precious contexture of corruptible things ; the clothing of humility, simple in shew, but rich in substance, 1 Pet. v. 5, which enriches and beautifies the soul that hath it, more than all Solomon's glory could do in his person ; for " better is it to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, than divide the spoil with the proud," Prov. xvi. 19 ; in a word, the Spirit makes all new, puts a new man, a new fashion and image on the soul, which suits the court of heaven,

the highest in the world ; and is conformed to the noblest and highest pattern, the holiness and beauty of the greatest king. And being lodged within, O what sweet fruits is the Spirit daily bringing forth to feed and delight the soul withal ! Gal. v. 22 23. And he is not only a Spirit of sanctification, but of consolation too ; and therefore of all, the most worthy to be received into our hearts, for he is a bosom comforter, John xiv. 16, when there is no friend nor lover without, but a soul in that posture of Heman, Psal. lxxxviii. 18 ; and in that desolate estate of the churches, Lam. i. 2, “ Among her lovers she hath none to comfort her.” Ver. 17, “ Spreading forth her hands, and none to comfort her.” Ver. 21, “ Sighing, and none to comfort her.” In such a case, to have a living and overrunning spring of comfort within, when all external and lower consolations, like winter brooks that dry up in summer, have dried up and disappointed thy expectation, sure this were a happy guest, that could do this. O that we could open our hearts to receive him !

## XXV.

Verse 9.—If so be, that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

**THERE** is a great marriage spoken of, Eph. v. that hath a great mystery in it, which the apostle propoundeth as the sample and archetype of all marriages, or rather as the substance, of which all conjunctions and relations among the creatures are but the shadows. It is that marriage between Christ and his church, for which it would appear this world was builded, to be a palace to celebrate it in ; and especially the upper house, heaven, was made glorious for that great day, where it shall be solemnized. The first in order of time was made by God himself in Paradise, certainly to represent a higher mystery, the marriage of the second Adam with his spouse, which is taken out of

his bloody side, as the apostle imports, Eph. v. Now there is the greatest inequality and disproportion between the parties, Christ and sinners; so that it would seem a desperate matter to bring two such distant and unequal natures to such a near union as may cast a copy to all unions and relations of the creatures. But he, who at first made a kind of marriage between heaven and earth, in the composure of man, and joined together an immortal spirit in such a bond of amity with corruptible dust, hath found out the way to help this and make it feasible. And truly, we may conceive the Lord was but making way for this greater mystery of the union of Christ with us, when he joined the breath of heaven with the dust of the earth. In this he gave some representation of another more mysterious conjunction. Now, the way that the wisdom and love of God hath found out to bring about this marriage, is this: Because there was such an infinite distance between the only-begotten Son of God, who is the express character of his image, and the brightness of his glory, and us sinful mortal creatures, whose foundation is in the dust; therefore it pleased the Father, out of his good-will to the match, to send his Son down among men, and the Son, out of his love, to take on our flesh, and to fill up that distance with his low condescendence, to be partaker of flesh and blood with the children. And now, what the Lord spoke of man fallen, in a holy kind of irony or mock, "behold he is become as one of us," that men may truly say of the Son of God, not fallen down from heaven, but come down willingly, "Lo! he is become as one of us; like us in all things, except sin," which hath made us unlike ourselves. This bond of union you have in the 3d verse—Christ so infinitely above sinners, and higher than the heavens, coming down so low, to be as like sinners as might be, or could be profitable for us, "in the likeness of sinful flesh," &c. But yet this bond is not near enough,—that conjunction seemeth but general and infirm; both because it is in some manner common to all mankind, who shall not be all advanced to this privilege.

By taking on our nature, he cometh nearer to human nature, but not to some beyond others; and besides, the distance is not filled up this way, because there is a great disproportion between that nature in Christ and in us. In him, it is holy and undefiled, and separated from sin; but in us, it is unclean and immersed in sin; so that, albeit he be nearer us as a man, yet he is far distant and unlike us, a holy, a perfect man. Now, what fellowship can be between light and darkness? As Paul speaketh of the marriage of Christians with idolaters; much greater distance and disagreement is between Christ and us. Therefore, it seemeth that some of us must be changed and transformed: but he it may not be. He cannot become liker us than by partaking of our flesh; for if he had become a sinner indeed, he would have become so like us, that he could not help himself nor us either; this would eclipse the glory and happiness of the marriage. But in that he came as near as could be, without disabling himself, to make us happy; and so he was contented to come in the place of sinners, and take on their debt. and answer to God's justice for it; yea, and in his own person he submitted to be tempted to sin, though it had been evil for us had he been overcome by it; yet this brings him a step lower and nearer us, and maketh the union more hopeful. But since he can come no lower, and can be made no liker us in the case we are in; then certainly, if the match hold, we must become liker him, and raised up out of our miserable estate to some suitableness to his holy nature. And therefore, in the love and wisdom of God,—to fill up the distance completely, and effectuate this happy conjunction, that the creation seemeth to groan for, (for, verse 22. the whole creation is pained till it be accomplished,)—he hath sent his blessed Spirit to dwell in us, and to transform our natures, and “make them partakers of the divine nature,” 2 Pet. i. 4, as Christ was partaker of human nature. And thus the distance shall be removed;—when a blessed Spirit is made flesh, and a fleshly man made spirit, then

they are near the day of espousals ; and this indwelling of the Spirit is the last link of the chain that fastens us to Christ, and maketh our flesh in some measure like his holy flesh. By taking on our flesh, Christ became bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. But the union becometh mutual, when we receive the Spirit. We become bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, as it is expressed, Eph. v. 30, in allusion to the creation of Eve, and her marriage to Adam. The ground of the marriage is, that near bond of union, because she was taken out of man, and therefore because of his flesh and bone she was made one flesh with him. Even so the sinner must be partaker of the Spirit of Christ, as Christ is partaker of the flesh of sinners ; and these two concurring, these two knots interchanging and woven through other, we become one flesh with him. And this is a great mystery indeed, to bring two, who were so far asunder, so near each other. Yea, it is nearer than that too ; for we are said, not only to be one flesh with Christ, but one spirit—I Cor. vi. 17, “ He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit,” because he is animated and quickened by one Spirit, that same Spirit of Christ. And indeed spirits are more capable of union, and more fit to embosom one with another than bodies ; therefore the nearest union conceivable is the union of spirits by affection. This maketh two souls one, for it transports their spirit out of the body where it lives, and setteth it there where it loveth.

Now, my beloved, you see what way this great marriage, that heaven and earth are in a longing expectation after, shall be brought about. Christ did forsake his Father’s house, when he left that holy habitation, his Father’s bosom, a place of marvellous delight, Prov. viii. 30, ‘ and descended into the lower parts of the earth,’ Eph. iv. 9. And he came out from the Father into the world, John xvi. 28. This was a great journey to meet with poor sinners. But, that there may be a full and entire meeting, you must leave and forsake your father’s house too, and forget your own people, Psal. xlv. 10. You must give an entire renounce to all former lovers, if you would be his ;

all former bonds and engagements must be broken, that this may be tied the faster. And to hold to the subject in hand, you must forsake and forget the flesh, and be possessed of his holy Spirit; as he came down to our flesh, you must rise up to meet him in the Spirit. The Spirit of Christ must indeed prevent you, and take you out of that natural posture you are born in, and bring you a great journey from yourselves, that you may be joined unto him.

This Spirit of Christ is his messenger and ambassador sent before-hand to fit you and suit you for the day of espousals; and therefore he must have a dwelling and constant abode in you. This indwelling imports,—a special familiar operation, and the perpetuity or continuance of it. The Spirit is every where in his Being, and he worketh every where too; but here he hath a special and peculiar work in commission.—to reveal the love of God in Christ, to engage the soul to love him again, to prepare all within for the great day of espousals, to purify and purge the heart from all that is displeasing to Christ, to correspond between Christ and his spouse, between heaven and earth, by making intercession for her when she cannot pray for herself, as you find here, ver. 26, and so sending up the news of the soul's panting and breathing after Christ, sending up her groans and sighs to her Beloved, giving intelligence of all her necessities to him, who is above, in the place of an advocate and interceder: and then bring back from heaven, light and life, direction from her head (for the Spirit must lead into all truth) and consolation; for Christ hath appointed the Spirit to supply his absence, and to comfort the soul in the meantime till he come again. You have this mutual and reciprocal knot in 1 John iv. 13, "Hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, by the Spirit that he hath given." It is much nearness to dwell one with another, but much greater, to dwell one in another. And it is reciprocal, such a wonderful interchange in it,—we in him and he in us: for the Spirit carries the soul to heaven, and brings

Christ, as it were, down to the earth. He is the messenger that carries the letters between both : our prayers to him, and his prayers for us, and love-tokens to us, the anointing that teacheth us all things, from our Husband, 1 John ii. 27, "and revealing to us the word of God," 1 Cor. ii. 12,—giving us the first fruits of that happy and glorious communion we must have with Christ in heaven, as you see, ver. 23. of this chapter, and sealing us to the day of redemption, Eph. i. 13, and iv. 30. Supplying us with divine power against our spiritual enemies, fetching along from heaven that strength whereby our Lord and Saviour overcame all, Eph. iii. 16 ; Gal. v. 17. This is a presence that few have, such a familiar and love abode : but certainly, all that are Christ's must have it in some measure. Now, whosoever hath it, it is perpetual,—the Spirit dwells in them. It is not a sojourning for a season, not a lodging for a season, not a night, as some have—fits and starts of seeking God, and some transient motions of conviction or joy, but return again to the puddle. These go through them as lightning, and do not warm them or change them, but this is a constant residence. Where the Spirit takes up house he will dwell. He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you, and abide for ever, John xiv. 16. 17. If the Son abide in the house for ever, John viii. 35, much more the master of the house must abide. Now, the Spirit where he dwells hath gotten the command of that house ; all the power is put in his hand, and resigned to him ; for where he dwells he must rule, as good reason is. He is about the greatest work that is now to do in the world,—the repairing and renewing of the ruins and breaches of man's spirit, which was the first breach in the creation, and the cause of all the rest. He is about the cleansing and washing this temple, and we may be persuaded, "that he who hath begun this good work will perform it until the day of Christ, till we be presented blameless and without spot to our Husband," Phil. i. 5, 6. And this is the grand consolation of believers, that they

have this presence assured to them by promise ; that the Spirit is fixed here by an irrevocable and unchangeable covenant or donation and will not wholly depart from them though he may withdraw and leave you comfortless for a season, Isa. lix. 21.

Therefore I would shut up all in a word of exhortation to you,—that since we have the promise of so noble and happy a guest, you would apply yourselves to seek him, and then keep him ; to receive him, and then retain him. It is true, that he must first prevent us ; for as no man can say, that Jesus is the Christ but by the Spirit of God, so no man can indeed pray for the Spirit, but by the Spirit's own intercession within him. Where God hath bestowed anything of this Spirit, it is known by the kindly and fervent desires after more of it. Now, since we have such a large and ample promise, Ezek. xxxiv. 27. Joel ii. 28, of the pouring out of the Spirit, and that in as absolute and free a manner as can be imagined ; and this renewed by Christ, and confirmed by his prayer to the Father for the performance of it, John xiv. 16, 17, and then we have a sweet and affectionate promise propounded in the most moving and loving manner that can be, Luke xi. 13, where he encourageth us to pray for the Spirit, and that from this ground, that our heavenly Father, who placed that natural affection in other fathers toward their children, whereby they cannot refuse them bread when they cry for it ; he, who was the author of all natural affection, must certainly transcend them infinitely in his love to his children, as the Psalmist argues, Shall not he that planted the ear, hear, and he that formed the eye, see ? So may a poor soul reason itself to some confidence. Shall not he, who is the fountain of all natural love in men and beasts, have much more himself ? And if my father will not give me a stone when I seek bread, certainly he will far less do it. Therefore, “ if we, being evil, know how to give good things to our children, how much more shall our heavenly Father give his Spirit to them that ask him.” Alas ! that we should want such a



gift for not asking it! My beloved, let us enlarge our desires for this Spirit, and seek more earnestly; and no doubt affection and importunity will not be sent away empty. Is it any wonder we receive not, because we ask not, or we ask too coldly, that we teach him in a manner to deny us, *qui timide rogat*, I may say, *frigide, docet negare*. Ask frequently, and ask confidently, and his heart cannot deny. O that we could lay this engagement on our own hearts—to be more in prayer! Let us press ourselves to this, and we need not press him. Albeit the first grace be wholly a surprisal; yet certainly he keeps this suitable method in the enlargements of grace, that when he gives more, he enlargeth the heart more after it. He openeth the mouth wider to ask and receive, and according to that capacity, so is his hand opened to fill the heart. O why are our hearts shut when his hand is open! Again, I would exhort you in Jesus Christ, to entertain the Spirit suitably, and this shall keep him. To this purpose are these exhortations: “Grieve not the Spirit,” Eph. iv. 30, and “quench not the Spirit,” 1 Thess. v. 19. There is nothing can grieve him but sin; and if you entertain that, you cannot retain him. He is a Spirit of holiness, and he is about the making you holy. Then do not mar him in his work. Labour to advance this, and you do him a pleasure. If you make his holy temple an unclean cage for hateful birds, or a temple for idols, how can it but grieve him? And if you grieve the Spirit, certainly the Spirit will grieve you, will make you repent it at the heart. Please him, by hearkening to his motions, and following his direction, and he shall comfort you. His office is to be a spring of consolation to you; but if you grieve him by walking in the imagination of your hearts, and following the suggestions of the flesh, his enemy, no doubt that spring will turn its channel another way, and dry up for a season toward you. It is not every sin or infirmity that grieves him thus, if so be that it grieve thee; but the entertaining of any sin and making peace with any of his enemies, that cannot but displease

him. And, O what loss you have by it! You displease your greatest friend to please your greatest enemy: you blot and blunder that seal of the Spirit, that you shall not be able to read it till it be cleansed and washed again. Now, “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his”—he is not a Christian. Take this along with you, who aim at nothing but the external and outward shew or visible standing in the church. If you have not this Spirit found on you, Christ will not know you for his in that day of his appearing.

## XXVI.

Verse 10.—And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin: but the Spirit is life, because of righteousness.

God's presence is his working. His presence in a soul by his Spirit is his working in such a soul in some special manner, not common to all men, but peculiar to them whom he hath chosen. Now, his dwelling is nothing else but a continued, familiar, and endless working in a soul, till he have conformed all within to the image of his Son. The soul is the office-house or work-house that the Spirit hath taken up, to frame in it the most curious piece of the whole creation, even to restore and repair that masterpiece which came last from God's hand, *ab ultima manu*, and so was the chiefest; I mean, the image of God, in righteousness and holiness. Now, this is the bond of union between God and us, Christ is the bond of union with God, but the Spirit is the bond of union with Christ. Christ is the peace between God and us, that makes of two one, but the Spirit is the link between Christ and us, whereby he hath immediate and actual interest in us, and we in him. I find the union between Christ and a soul shadowed out in the Scripture by the nearest relations among creatures,—for truly these are but shadows, and that is the body or substance—and because an union

that is mutual, is nearest, it is often so expressed, as it imports an interchangeable relation, a reciprocal conjunction with Christ. The knot is cast on both sides to make it strong: Christ in us, and we in him; God dwelling in us, and we in him; and both by this one Spirit,—1 John iv. 13, “Hereby we know that God dwelleth in us, and we in him, by his Spirit which he hath given us.” You find it often in John, who being most possessed with the love of Christ, and most sensible of his love, could best express it: “I in them, and they in me. He that keepeth his commands dwelleth in him, and he in him.” As the names of married persons are spelled through other, so doth he spell out this indwelling. It is not cohabitation, but inhabitation; neither that alone singly, but mutual inhabitation, which amounts to a kind of penetration, the most intimate and immediate presence imaginable. Christ dwelleth in our hearts by faith; and we dwell in Christ by love, Ephes. i. 7, and 1 John iv. Death bringeth him into the heart; for it is the very application of a Saviour to a sinful soul. It is the very applying of his blood and sufferings to the wound that sin hath made in the conscience: the laying of that sacrifice propitiatory to the wounded conscience, is that which heals it, pacifies it, and calms it. A Christian, by receiving the offer of the gospel cordially and affectionately, brings in Christ offered into his house, and then salvation comes with him. Therefore believing is receiving, John i., the very opening of the heart to let in an offered Saviour; and then Christ, thus possessing the heart by faith, works by love, and “he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.” Love hath this special virtue in it, that it transports the soul in a manner out of itself, to the beloved, Cant. i. 9. *Anima est ubi amat, non ubi animat.* The fixing and establishing of the heart on God is a dwelling in him; for the constant and most continued residence of the most serious thoughts and affections will be their dwelling in their all-fulness and richness of grace in Jesus Christ. As the Spirit dwelleth where he worketh, so the soul dwelleth where it

delighteth. Its complacency in God making a frequent issue or outgiving to him in desires and breathings after him: and by means of this same, God dwelleth in the heart; for love is the opening up of the inmost chamber of the heart to him,—it brings in the Beloved into the very secrets of his soul “to lie all night betwixt his breasts, as a bundle of myrrh,” Cant. i. 13. And indeed all the sweet odours of holy duties, and all the performing of good works and edifying speeches, spring out only, and are sent forth from this bundle of myrrh that lies betwixt the breasts of a Christian, in the inmost of his heart, from Christ dwelling in the affections of the soul.

Now, this being the bond of union betwixt Christ and us, it follows necessarily, that whoever hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And this is subjoined for prevention or removal of the misapprehension and delusions of men in their self-judgings: because self-love blinds our eyes, and maketh our hearts deceive themselves. We are given to this self-flattery,—to pretend and claim to an interest in Jesus Christ, even though there be no more evidence for it, than the external relations that we have to Christ, as members of his visible body, or partakers of a common influence of his Spirit. There are some external bonds and ties to Christ, which are like a knot that may easily be loosed, if any thing get hold of the end of it; as by our relation to Christ by baptism, hearing the word, your outward covenanting to be his people. All these are loose unsure knots. It is as easy to untie them, as to tie them, yea, and more easy; and yet many have no other relation to Christ than what these make. But it is only the Spirit of Christ given to us that entitles and interesteth us in him and him in us. It is the Spirit working in your souls mightily and continually, making your hearts temples for the offering of the sacrifice of prayer and praises, casting out all idols out of these temples, that he alone may be adored and worshipped, by the affectionate service of the heart, purging them from all filthiness of flesh and spirit; it is the Spirit, I say, thus dwelling in

men, that maketh them living members of the true body of Christ, lively joined to the head, Christ. This maketh him yours, and you his. By virtue of this he may command you as his own, and you may use and employ him as your own. Now, for want of this in most part of men, they also want this living saving interest in Christ. They have no real, but an imaginary and notional propriety and right to the Lord Jesus; for Christ must first take possession of us by his Spirit, before we have any true right to him, or can willingly resign ourselves to him, and give him right over us. What shall it profit us, my beloved, to be called Christians, and to esteem ourselves so, if really we be none of Christ's? Shall it not heighten our condemnation so much the more, that we desire to pass for such, and give out ourselves for so, and yet have no inward acquaintance and interest in him, whose name we love to bear? Are not the most part shadows and pictures of true Christians, bodies without the soul of Christianity, that is, the Spirit of Christ,—whose hearts are treasures of wickedness and deceit, and store-houses of iniquity and ignorance. It may be known what treasure fills the heart, by that which is the constant and common vent of it, as our Saviour speaks, Matt. xv. 19, and xii. 34, 35, “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks,” the feet walk, and the hand works,—consider then, if the Spirit of God dwelleth in such unclean habitations and dark dungeons; certainly no uncleanness or darkness of the house can hinder him to come in; but it is a sure argument and evidence that he is not as yet come in, because the prince of darkness is not yet cast out of many souls, nor yet the unclean spirits that lodge within. These haunt your hearts, and are as familiar now as ever. Sure I am, many souls have never yet changed their guests, and it is as sure that the first guest that taketh up the soul is darkness and desperate wickedness, with unparalleled deceitfulness. There is an accursed trinity, instead of that blessed Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; and when this holy Trinity cometh in to dwell, that other

of hell must go out. Now, my beloved, do you think this a light matter,—to be disowned by Jesus Christ? Truly the word of Christ, which is the character of all our evidences and rights for heaven, disowns many as bastards and dead members, withered branches; and certainly, according to this word he will judge you. “The word that I have spoken shall judge you in the last day.” O that is a heavy word! You have the very rule and method of proceeding laid down before you now, which shall be punctually kept at that great day. Now, why do you not read your ditty and condemnatory sentence here registered? If you do not read it now, in your consciences, he will one day read it before men and angels, and pronounce this, “I know you not for mine, you are none of mine.” But if you would now take it to your hearts, there might be hope that it should go no further, and come to no more public hearing. There were hope that it should be repealed before that day, because the first entry of the Spirit of Christ is to convince men of sin, that they are unbelievers, and without God in the world. And if this were done, then it were more easy to convince you of Christ’s righteousness, and persuade you to embrace it; and this would lead in another link of the chain, the conviction of judgment, to persuade you to resign yourselves to the Spirit’s rule, and renounce the kingdom of Satan. This were another trinity, a trinity upon earth, three bearing witness on the earth that you have the Spirit of God.

Verse 10.—“And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin,” &c. All the preceding verses seem to be purposely set down by the apostle for the comfort of Christians against the remnants of sin and corruption within them; for in the preceding chapter, he personates the whole body of Christ militant, shewing in his own example how much sin remains in the holiest in this life. And this he rather instances in his own person than another, that all may know that matter of continual sorrow and lamentation is furnished to the chiefest

of saints. And yet in this chapter, he propounds the consolation of Christians more generally, that all may know, that these privileges and immunities belong even to the meanest and weakest of Christians; that as the best have reason to mourn in themselves, so the worst want not reason to rejoice in Jesus Christ. And this should always be minded, that the amplest grounds of the strongest consolation are general to all that come indeed to Jesus Christ, and are not restricted unto saints of such and such a growth and stature. The common principles of the gospel are more full of this milk of consolation, if you would suck it out of them, than many particular grounds which you are laying down for yourselves. God hath so disposed and contrived the work of our salvation, that in this life he that hath gathered much, in some respect hath nothing over, that is to say, hath no more reason to boast than another, but will be constrained to sit down and mourn over his own evil heart and the emptiness of it; and he that hath gathered less, hath in some sense no want; I mean, he is not excluded and shut out from the right to those glorious privileges, which may express gloriation and rejoicings from the heart,—that there might be an equality in the body. He maketh the stronger Christian to partake with the weaker in his bitter things, and the weaker with the stronger in his sweet things; that none of them may conceive themselves either despised, or alone regarded; that the eunuch may not have reason to say, “I am a dry tree,” Isa. lvi. 3. For, behold the Lord will give, even to such, a place in his house, and a name better than of sons and daughters. The soul that is in sincerity aiming at this walk, and whose inward desires stir after more of his Holy Spirit,—he will not refuse to such that name and esteem, that they dare not take to themselves, because of their seen and felt unworthiness. Now, in this verse he proceeds further, to the fruits and effects of sin dwelling in us, to enlarge the consolation against that too. Now, “If Christ be in you, the body,” &c. Seeing the word of God hath made such a connec-

tion between sin and death, and death is the wages of sin, and that which is the just recompense of enmity and rebellion against God,—the poor troubled soul might be ready to conceive, that, if the body be adjudged to death for sin, the rest of the wages shall be paid, and sin having so much dominion as to kill the body, it shall exercise its full power to destroy all. Seeing we have a visible character of the curse of God engraven on us in the mortality of our bodies, we may look with such a visage on the soul's trouble for sin, as if it were but earnest of the full curse and weight of wrath, and that sin were not fully satisfied for, nor justice fully contented by Christ's ransom. Now, he opposes this misconception, the strongest ground of consolation, "if Christ be in you, though your bodies must die for sin," because sin dwelleth in them, yet that Spirit of life that is in you, hath begun eternal life in your souls. Your spirits are not only immortal in being, but that eternal happy being is begun in you. The seeds of it are cast into your souls, and shall certainly grow up to perfection of holiness and happiness, and this through the righteousness of Christ, which assureth that state unto you. The comfort is, it is neither total, for it is only the death of your bodies; nor is it perpetual, for your bodies shall be raised again to life eternal, ver. 11. And not only is it only in part, and for a season, but it is for a blessed end and purpose. It is that sin may be wholly cleansed out, that this tabernacle is taken down, as the leprous houses were to be taken down under the law, and as now we use to cast down pest-lodges, the better to cleanse them of the infection. It is not to prejudge him of life, but to instal him in a better life. Thus you see that it is neither total nor perpetual, but it is medicinal and profitable to the soul. It is but the death of the body for a moment, and the life of the soul for ever.



## XXVII.

Verse 10.—And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin.

THIS is the high excellency of the Christian religion, that it contains the most absolute precepts for an holy life, and the greatest comforts in death. For from these two, the truth and excellency of religion is to be measured,—if it have the highest and most perfect rule of walking, and the chiefest comfort withal. Now, the perfection of Christianity you saw in the rule, how spiritual it is! How reasonable! How divine! How free from all corrupt mixture! How transcending, all the most exquisite precepts and laws of men, deriving a holy conversation from the highest fountain, the Spirit of Christ, and conforming it to the highest pattern, the will of God. And indeed, in the first word of this verse, there is something of the excellent nature of Christianity holden out,—“if Christ be in you,” which is the true description of a Christian, one in whom Christ is, which imports, the divine principle and the spiritual subject of Christianity. The principle is Christ in a man, Christ by his Spirit dwelling in him. This great apostle knew this well in his own experience, and therefore he can speak best in this style, “I live, yet not I, but Christ in me,” Gal. ii. 20—importing, that Christ and his Spirit is to the soul what the soul is to the body: that there is a living influence from heaven, that acts and moves the soul of a Christian as powerfully, yet as sweet and pleasantly, as if it were the natural motion of the soul. And truly it is the natural motion of the soul; it is that primitive life which was most connatural to the soul of man, which sin did deprive us of. All the powerful constraint and violence that Christ uses in drawing the souls of men to him, and after him, is as kindly unto them, and perfects

them as much, as that impulse by which the soul moves and turns the body;—a sweet compulsion and blessed violence! Now this should make Christians often to reflect upon another principle of their life than themselves, that by looking on him, who is the resurrection and the life, who is the true vine, and abiding in him by faith, their life may be continued and increased. It is certainly much reflection on him, who is All in All; and less upon ourselves, that maintains this life. And therefore, the most part of men being wholly strangers to this, whether in purposes or practices, or judgings of both, unacquainted with any higher look in religion than they use in their natural and civil actings,—it doth give ground to assure us, that they are strangers alienated from the life of God, without God, without Christ in the world.

But then, the spiritual subject of Christianity is here,—Christ in you, not Christ without you, in ordinances, in profession, in some civil carriage; but Christ within the heart of a man that is a Christian. It is the receiving of Christ into the soul, and putting him on upon the inner man, and renewing it, that makes a Christian. Not being externally clothed with him, or compassed about with him in the administration of the ordinances. It fears me, most part of us who bear the name of Christianity, have no character of it within, if we were looked and searched. Many are like the sepulchres Christ speaks of,—without, painted and fair, within nothing but rottenness and dead bones. What have many of you more of Christ, than what a blind man hath of light? It is round about him, not within him. The light hath shined in darkness, but your darkness cannot comprehend it. You are environed with the outward appearances of Christ in his word and ordinances, and that is all; but neither within you, nor upon many of you, is there anything either of his light or life. Not so much as any outward profession or behaviour, suitable to the revelation of Christ, about you. As if you were ashamed to be Christians, you maintain gross ignorance, and practise manifest re-

bellion against his known will, in the very light of the gospel. How few have so much tincture of Christ, so much as to cover the external man, or to clothe it with any blamelessness of walking, or form of religion! How few are so much as Christians in the letter! For you are not either acquainted with letter or spirit, either with knowledge, or affection, or practice. But suppose that some have put on Christ on their outward man, and colour over themselves with such performances of religious duties, and smooth themselves with civility in carriage; yet, alas! how few are they who are renewed in the spirit of their mind, and have put on Christ in their inward man, who have opened the secrets of their hearts, and received him to lie all night between their breasts? How few are busied about their hearts, to have any new impression and dye upon their affections, to mould them after a new manner, to kill the love of this world, and the lusts of it, and cast out the rottenness and superfluity of naughtiness which abides within! But some there are who are persuaded thus to do, to give up their spirits to religion; and all their business and care is, to have Christ within, as well as without. Now, if the rest of you will not be persuaded to be of this number, consider what you prejudge yourselves of,—of all the comfort of religion; and then religion is no religion, and to no purpose, if you have no benefit by it. And certainly, except Christ be in you, as a King to rule you, and a Prophet to teach you, to subdue your lusts, and dispel your darkness when he appears, he cannot appear to your comfort and salvation. You are deprived of this great cordial against death, and death must seize upon all that is within you, soul and body, since Christ, the Spirit of life, is not within you. Happiness without you will not make you happy. Salvation round about you will not save you. If you would be saved, there must be a near and immediate union with happiness: Christ in the heart, and salvation cometh with him. A Christian is not only Christ without, not imputing his sins to him, clothing him with his righteousness;

but Christ within too, cleansing the heart from the love of sin, "perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Do not think you have any share in Christ without you, except you receive Christ within you; because Christ is one within and without, and his gifts are undivided. Therefore true faith receives whole Christ, as a complete Saviour; even as he is entirely offered, so he is undividedly received. As he is without saving us, and within sanctifying us,—Christ without, delivering from wrath, and Christ within, redeeming from all iniquity,—these cannot be parted, more than his coat that had no seam. It is a heavy and weighty word of this apostle's, 2 Cor. xiii. 5, "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; know you not your own selves, that Christ is in you, except you be reprobates?" I wish you would lay it to heart, who have never yet returned to your hearts: if Christ be not formed in you, as Gal. iv. 19, you are as yet among the refuse, dross, and that must be burnt with fire. You cannot but be cast away in the day when he makes up his jewels. Where Christ is, he is the hope of glory, he is an immortal seed of glory. How can you hope for Christ, who have nothing of him within you?

Now, the other touch-stone of true religion is, the great comfort it furnishes to the soul: and of all comforts the greatest is that which is a cordial to the heart against the greatest fears and evils. Now, certainly the matter of greatest fear is death, not so much because of itself, but chiefly because of that eternity of unchangeable misery, that naturally it transmits them unto. Now, it is only Christian religion possessing the heart that arms a man completely against the fear either of death itself or the consequents of it. It giveth the most powerful consolation, that not only overcometh the bitterness, and taketh out the sting of death, but changeth the nature of it so far, as to make it the matter of triumph and gloriation.

There is something here supposed:—the worst that can befall a Christian, is the death of a part of him, and that

the worst and ignoble part only,—“the body is dead because of sin.” Then, that which is opposed by way of comfort to counterbalance it is,—the life of his better and more noble part. And, besides, we have the fountains both of that death and this life,—man’s sin the cause of bodily death, Christ’s righteousness the fountain of spiritual life.

Of death many have had sweet meditations, even among those that the light of the word hath not shined upon. And indeed they may make us ashamed who profess Christianity, and so the hope of the resurrection from the dead, that they have accounted it only true wisdom and sound philosophy to meditate often on death; and made it the very principal point of living well, to be always learning to die, and have applied their whole studies that way, neglecting present things that are in the by, have given themselves to search out some comfort against death, or from death. Yea, some have so profited in this, that they have accounted death the greatest good that can befall man, and persuaded others to think so. Now, what may we think of ourselves, who scarce apprehend mortality, especially considering that we have the true fountain of it revealed to us, and the true nature and consequents of it.

All men must needs know, that death is the most universal king in the world,—that it reigns over all ages, sexes, conditions, nations, and times. Though few be willing to entertain thoughts of it; yet sooner or later they must be constrained to give it lodging upon their eyelids, and suffer it to storm the very strongest tower, the heart, and batter it down, and break the strings of it, having no way either to fly from it or resist it. Now, the consideration of the general inundation of death over all mankind, and the certain approaching of it to every particular man’s door, hath made many serious thoughts among the wise men of the world. But being destitute of this heavenly light that shineth to us, they could not attain to the original of it; but have conceived that it was

a common tribute of nature, and an universal law imposed upon all mankind by nature, having the same reason that other mutations and changes among creatures here below have; and so have thought it no more a strange thing than to see other things dissolved in their elements. Now indeed, seeing they could apprehend no other bitter ingredient in it, it was no wonder that the wisest of them could not fear it, but rather wait and expect it as a rest from their labours, as the end of all their miseries

But the Lord hath revealed unto us, in his word, the true cause of it, and so the true nature of it. The true cause of it is sin,—“sin entered into the world, and death past upon all, for that all have sinned,” Rom. v. 12. Man was created for another purpose, and upon other conditions, and a law of perpetual life and eternal happiness was past in his favour, he abiding in the Father, and obeying the will of him that gave him life and being. Now, sin interposing, and separating between man and God, loosing that blessed knot of union and communion, it was this other law that succeeded, as a suitable recompense,—“thou shalt die.” It is resolved in the council of heaven, that the union of man shall be dissolved, his soul and body separated, in just recompense of the breaking the bond of union with God. This is it that hath opened the sluice to let in an inundation of misery upon mankind. This was the just occasion of that righteous but terrible appointment, “It is appointed that all men once shall die, and after death come to judgment,” Heb. ix. 27. That since the body had enticed the soul, and suggested unto it such unnatural and rebellious motions of withdrawing from the blessed Fountain of life, to satisfy its pleasure, the body should be under a sentence of deprivation and forfeiture of that great benefit and privilege of life it had by the soul’s indwelling, and condemned to return to its first base original, the dust, and to be made a feast of worms, to lodge in the grave, and be a subject of the greatest corruption and rottenness, because it became the instrument, yea, the incitement of the soul to sin against

that God that had from heaven breathed a spirit into it, and exalted it above all the clay or dust in the world. Now, my beloved, do we not get many remembrances of our sins? Is not every day presenting our primitive departure from God, our first separation from the fountain of life by sin, to our view, and in such sad and woful effects pointing out the heinousness of sin? Do you not see men's bodies every day dissolved, the tabernacle of earth taken down, and the soul constrained to remove out of it? But what influence hath it upon us, what do the multiplied funerals work upon us? It may be, sorrow for our friends, but little or no apprehension of our own mortality and base impression of sin, that separates our souls from God. Who is made sadly to reflect upon his original, or to mind seriously that statute and appointment of heaven,—“in that day thou shalt die?” It is strange that all of us fear death, and few are afraid of sin, that carries death in its bosom; that we are so unwilling to reap corruption in our bodies, and yet we are so earnest and laborious in sowing to the flesh. Be not deceived, for you are daily reaping what you have sown. And, O that it were all the harvest! But death is only the putting in of the sickle of vengeance, the first cut of it. But, to think on what follows, would certainly restrain men, and cool them in their fervent pursuits after sin!

## XXVIII.

Verse 10.—And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin: but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

“THE sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law,” saith our apostle, 1 Cor. xv. 56. These two concur to make man mortal, and these two are the bitter ingredients of death. Sin procured it, and the law appointed it: and God hath seen to the exact execution of that law in all ages; for what man liveth and shall not taste of death?

Two only escaped the common lot, Enoch and Elias ; for they pleased God, and God took them. And besides, it was for a pledge, that at the last day all shall not die, but be changed. The true cause of death is sin, and the true nature of it is penal, to be a punishment for sin. Take away this relation to sin, and death wants the sting. But in its first appointment, and as it prevails generally over men, *aculeata est mors*, it hath a sting that pierceth deeper, and woundeth sorer, than to the desolation of the body,—it goeth into the innermost parts of the soul, and woundeth that eternally. The truth is, the death of the body is not either the first death or the last death. It is rather placed in the middle between two deaths : and it is the fruit of the first, and the root of the last. There is a death hath immediately ensued upon sin, and it is the separation of the soul from God, the fountain of life and blessedness. And this is the death often spoken of, “you who were dead in sins and trespasses,” &c. Eph. ii. 1. “Being past feeling, and alienated from the life of God,” Eph. iv. 18, 19. And truly, this is worse in itself than the death of the body simply, though not so sensible, because spiritual. The corruption of the best part in man, in all reason, is worse than the corruption of his worse part. But this death which consists especially in the loss of that blessed communion with God, which made the soul happy, cannot be found till some new life enter, or else till the last death come, which adds infinite pain to infinite loss. Now the death of the body succeeds this soul’s death, and that is, the separation of the soul from the body, most suitable, seeing the soul was turned from the fountain spirit to the body, that the body should by his command return to dust, and be made the most defiled piece of dust. Now, this were not so grievous, if it were not a step to the death to come, and a degree of it introductive to it. But that statute and appointment of heaven hath thus linked it,—“after death comes judgment.” Because, the soul in the body would not be sensible of its separation from God, but was wholly taken up with the body, neglecting and miskening that infinite



loss of God's favour and face, therefore the Lord commands it to go out of the body, that it may then be sensible of its infinite loss of God, when it is separated from the body; that it may then have leisure to reflect upon itself, and find its own surpassing misery. And then indeed infinite pain and infinite loss conjoined—eternal banishment from the presence of that blessed Spirit, and eternal torment within itself; these two concurring, what posture do you think such a soul will be in! There are some earnest of this in this life, when God reveals his terror, and sets men's sins in order before their face. O how intolerable is it, and more unsupportable than many deaths! They that have been acquainted with it, have declared it,—the terrors of God are like poisonable arrows sunk into Job's spirit, and drinking up all the moisture darts of it. Such a spirit as is wounded with one of those shot from heaven, who can bear it? Not the most patient and most magnanimous spirit, that can sustain all other infirmities, Prov. xviii. 14. Now, my beloved, if it be so now, while the soul is in the body, drowned in it, what will be the case of the soul separated from the body, when it shall be all one sense, to reflect and consider itself.

This is the sting of death indeed, worse than a thousand deaths, to a soul that apprehends it; and the less it is apprehended the worse it is; because it is the more certain and must shortly be found, when there is no brazen serpent to heal that sting. Now, what comfort have you provided against this day? What way do you think to take out this sting? Truly, there is no balm for it, no physician for it but one; and that the Christian is only acquainted with. He in whom Christ is, he hath this sovereign antidote against the poison of death, he hath the very sting of it taken out by Christ, death itself killed, and of a mortal enemy made the kindest friend. And so he may triumph with the apostle, "O death where is thy sting, O grave, where is thy victory!" "Thanks be to God in Jesus Christ, who giveth us the victory." 1 Cor. xv. 55. The ground of his triumph, and that which a Christian

hath to oppose to all the sorrows, and pains, and fears, of death, mustered against him, is threefold,—one, that death is not real ; a second that it is not total, even that which is ; and then that it is not perpetual. This last is contained in the next verse, the second expressed in this verse, and the first may be understood or implied in it. That the nature of death is so far changed, that of a punishment it is become a medicine, of a punishment for sin it is turned into the last purgative of the soul from sin : and thus the sting of it is taken away,—that relation it did bear to the just wrath of God. And now the body of a Christian under appointment to die for sin, that is, for the death of sin, the eternal death of sin. Christ having come under the power of death, hath gotten power over it, and spoiled it of its stinging virtue. He hath taken away the poisonous ingredient of the curse, that it can no more hurt them that are in him, and so it is not now vested with that piercing and wounding notion of punishment. Though it be true that sin was the first inlet of death, that it first opened the sluice to let it enter and flow in upon mankind ; yet that appointment of death is renewed, and bears a relation to the destruction of sin, rather than the punishment of the sinner, who is forgiven in Christ. And, O how much solid comfort is here,—that the great reason of mortality that a Christian is subject unto, is, that he may be made free of that which made him at first mortal ! Because sin hath taken such possession in this earthly tabernacle, and is so strong a poison, that it hath infected all the members, and by no purgation here made, can be fully cleansed out, but there are many secret corners it lurks into, and upon occasion vents itself. Therefore it hath pleased God, in his infinite goodness, to continue the former appointment of death, but under a new and living consideration, to take down this infected and defiled tabernacle as the houses of leprosy were taken down under the law, that so they might be the better cleansed ; and this is the last purification of the soul from sin. And therefore, as one of the ancients said well, “That we might

not be eternally miserable, mercy hath made us mortal." Justice hath made the world mortal, that they might be eternally miserable; but to put an end to this misery Christ hath continued our mortality,—else he would have abolished death itself, if he had not meant to abolish sin by death. And indeed, it would appear this is the reason why the world must be consumed with fire at the last day, and new heavens and earth succeed in its room; because, as the little house, the body, so the great house, the world, was infected with this leprosy, and so subjoined to vanity and corruption because of man's sin. Therefore, that there might be no remnant of man's corruption, and no memorial of joy to interrupt his eternal joy, the Lord will purify and change all. All the members that were made instruments of unrighteousness, all the creatures that were servants to man's lusts, a new form and fashion shall be put on all, that the body being restored, may be a fit dwelling-place for the purified soul, and the world renewed, may be a fit house for righteous men. Thus you see, it is not the death of a Christian, but the death of sin his greatest enemy. It is not a punishment, but the enlargement of the soul.

Now, the next comfort is that which is but partial,—it is but the dissolution of the lowest part in man, his body; so far from prejudging the immortal life of his spirit, that it is rather the accomplishment of that. Though the body must die, yet eternal life is begun already within the soul, for the Spirit of Christ hath brought in life, the righteousness of Christ hath purchased it, and the Spirit hath performed it, and applied it to us. Not only is there an immortal being in a Christian that must survive the dust, for that is common to all men, but there is a new life begun in him, an immortal well-being in joy and happiness, which only deserves the name of life, that cometh never to its full perfection, till the bodily and earthly house be taken down. If you consider seriously what a new life a Christian is translated unto, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, and the ministration of the word. it is then

most active and lively, when the soul is most retired from the body in meditation. The new life of a Christian is most perfect in this life, when it carrieth him the furthest distance from his bodily senses, and is most abstracted from all sensible engagements, as you heard. For indeed it restores the spirit of a man to its native rule and dominion over the body, so that it is then most perfect, when it is most gathered within itself, and disengaged from all external entanglements.

Now, certain it is, since the perfection of the soul in this life consists in such a retirement from the body, that when it is wholly separated from it, then it is in the most absolute state of perfection; and its life acts most purely and perfectly, when it hath no body to communicate with, and to entangle it either with its lusts or necessities. The Spirit is life. It hath a life now which is then best when furthest from the body; and therefore it cannot but be surpassing better when it is out of the body; and all this is purchased by Christ's righteousness. As man's disobedience made an end of his life, Christ's obedience hath made our life endless. He suffered death to sting him, and by this hath taken the sting from it. And now, there is a new statute and appointment of heaven published in the gospel, "whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have eternal life." Now indeed, this hath so entirely changed the nature of death, that it hath now the most lovely and desirable aspect on a Christian, that it is no more an object of fear, but of desire,—amicable, not terrible unto him. Since there is no way to save the passenger but to let the vessel break, he will be content to have the body splitted, that himself, that is, his soul, may escape. For truly a man's soul is himself; the body is but an earthly tabernacle that must be taken down, to let the inhabitant win [*i. e.* get] out to come near his Lord. The body is the prison-house that he groans to have opened, that he may enjoy that liberty of the sons of God. And now to a Christian, death is not properly an object of patience, but of desire rather,—“I desire to be dissolved and be with

Christ," Phil. i. 23. He that hath but advanced little in Christianity will be content to die. But because there is too much flesh, he will desire to live. But a Christian that is riper in knowledge and grace, will rather desire to die, and only be content to live. He will exercise patience and submission about abiding here ; but groanings and pantings about removing hence, because he knoweth that there is no choice between that bondage and this liberty.

## XXIX.

Verse 10.—And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin ; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

It was the first curse and threatening, wherein God thought fit to comprehend all misery,—“Thou shalt die the death in that day thou eatest.” Though the sentence was not presently executed according to the letter, yet from that day forward man was made mortal ; and there seemeth to be much mercy and goodness of God intervening to plead a delay of death itself, that so the promise of life in the second Adam might come to the first and his posterity, and they might be delivered from the second death, though not from the first. Always we bear about the marks of sin in our bodies to this day ; and in so far the threatening taketh place, that this life that we live in the body is become nothing else but a dying life. The life that the ungodly shall live out of the body is a living death ; and either of these is worse than simple death or destruction of being. The serious contemplation of the miseries of this life, made wise Solomon to praise the dead more than the living, contrary to the custom of men, who rejoice at the birth of a man-child, and mourn at his death. Yea, it pressed him further, to think those which have not at all been, better than both ; because they have not seen the evil under the sun. This world is such a chaos, such a mass of miseries, that if men understood it before

they came into it, they would be far more loath to enter into it, than they are now afraid to go out of it. And truly we want not remembrances and representations of our misery every day, in that children come weeping into the world, as it were, bewailing their own misfortune, that they were brought forth to be sensible subjects of misery. And what is all our life-time, but a repetition of sighs and groans, anxiety and satiety, loathing and longing, dividing our spirits and our time between them? How many deaths must we suffer before death come! For the absence or loss of any thing much desired, is a separation no less grievous to the hearts of men than the parting of soul and body. For affection to temporal perishing things unites the soul so unto them, that there is no parting without pain, no dissolution of that continuity without much vexation; and yet the soul must suffer many such tortures in one day, because the things are perishing in their own nature, and uncertain. What is sleep, which devours most part of our time, but the very image and picture of death, a visible and daily representation of the long cessation of the sensitive life in the grave? And yet truly it is the best and most innocent part of our time, though we accuse it often. There is both less sin and less misery in it; for it is almost the only liniment and refreshment we get in all our miseries. Job sought it to assuage his grief, and ease his body: but it was the extremity of his misery that he could not find it. Now, my beloved, when you find that which is called life subject to so much misery, that you are constrained often to desire you had never been born; you find it a valley of tears, a house of mourning, from whence all true delight and solid happiness is banished. Seeing the very officers and sergeants of death are continually surrounding us, and walk alongst with us, though unpleasant company, in our greatest contentments. and are putting marks upon your doors, as in the time of the plague upon houses infected, "Lord have mercy upon us," and are continually bearing this motto to our view, and sounding this direction to our ears, *cito, procul, diu*, to get soon out of Sodom, that is

appointed for destruction, to fly quickly out of ourselves, to the refuge appointed of God, even one that “was dead and is alive, and hath redeemed us by his blood;” and to get far off from ourselves, and take up our dwelling in the blessed Son of God, through whose flesh there is access to the Father; seeing all these, I say, are so, why do not we awake ourselves upon the sound of the promise of immortality and life, brought to our ears in the gospel? Mortality hath already seized upon our bodies, but why do you not catch hold of this opportunity of releasing your souls from the chains and fetters of eternal death? Truly, my beloved, all that can be spoken of torments and miseries in this life, suppose we could imagine all the exquisite torments invented by the most cruel tyrants since the beginning to be combined in some one kind of torture, and would then stretch our imagination beyond that, as far as that which is composed of all torments surpasseth the simplest death; yet we do not conceive nor express unto you that death to come. Believe it, when the soul is out of the body, it is a most pure activity, all sense, all knowledge: and seeing where it is dulled and damped in the body, it is capable of so much grief or joy, pleasure or pain, we may conclude, that being loosed from these stupifying earthly chains, it is capable of infinitely more vexation, or contentation, in a higher or purer strain.

Therefore, we may conclude with the apostle, that all men by nature are miserable in life, but infinitely more miserable in death; only the man who is in Jesus Christ, in whose spirit Christ dwells, and hath made a temple of his body, for offering up reasonable service in it, that man only is happy in life, but far happier in death:—happy that he was born, but infinitely more happy that he was born mortal, born to die; for “if the body be dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness.” Men commonly make their accounts, and calculate their time so, as if death were the end of it. Truly, it were happiness in the generality of men, that that computation were true, either that it had never begun,

or that it might end here ; for that which is the greatest dignity and glory of a man, his immortal soul, is truly the greatest misery of sinful men, because it capacitates them for eternal misery. But if we make our accounts right, and take the right period, truly death is but the beginning of our time, of endless and unchangeable endurance, either in happiness or misery ; and this life in the body, which is only in the view of the short-sighted sons of men, is but a strait and narrow passage into the infinite ocean of eternity ; but so inconsiderable is it, that according as the spirit in this passage is fashioned and formed, so it must continue for ever ; “ for where the tree falleth, there it lieth.” There may be hope that a tree will sprout again, but truly there is no hope that ever the damned soul shall see a spring of joy ; and no fear that ever the blessed spirits shall find a winter of grief. Such is the evenness of eternity, that there is no shadow of change in it.

O then, how happy are they in whose souls this life is already begun, which shall then come to its meridian, when the glory of the flesh falls down like withered hay into the dust ! The life as well as the light of the righteous is progressive. It is shining more and more till that day come,—the day of death, only worthy to be called the present day, because it brings perfection. It mounts the soul in the highest point of the orb, and there is no declining from that again. The spirit is now alive in some holy affections and motions, breathing upwards, wrestling towards that point. The soul is now in part united to the fountain of life, by loving attendance and obedience, and it is longing to be more closely united. The inward senses are exercised about spiritual things, but the burden of this clayey mansion doth much dull and damp them, and proves a great *remora* to the spirit. The body indisposes and weakens the soul. There is life as in an infant : though a reasonable soul be there, yet, overwhelmed with the incapacity of the organs, this body is truly a prison of restraint and confinement to the soul, and often loathsome and ugly through the filthiness of sin ; but when the spirit



is delivered from this necessary burden and impediment, O! how lively is that life it then lives. Then the life, peace, joy, love, and delight of the soul, surmount all that is possible here, further than the highest exercise of the soul of the wisest men surpasses the brutish-like apprehensions of an infant; and indeed then, the Christian comes to his full stature, and is a perfect man, when he ceaseth to be a man.

How will you not be persuaded, beloved in the Lord, to long after this life, to have Christ formed in your hearts! For truly the generality have not so much as Christ fashioned in their outward habit, but are within darkness, earthiness, and wickedness, and without impiety and profanity! Will you not long for this life? For now you are dead while you live, as the apostle speaks of widows that live in pleasure. The more the soul be satisfied with earthly things, it is the deeper buried in the grave of the flesh, and the further separated from God. Alas! many of you know no other life than that which you now live in the body. You neither apprehend what this new birth is, nor what the perfect stature of it shall be afterwards; but truly while it is thus, you are but walking shadows, breathing clay, and no more. A godly man used to calculate the years of his nativity from his second birth, his conversion to God in Christ: and truly, this is the true period of the right calculation of life, of that life which shall not see death. True life hath but one period, that is, the beginning of it; for end it hath none. I beseech you reckon your years thus, and I fear that you reckon yourselves, many of you, yet dead in sins and trespasses. Is that life, I pray you, to eat, to drink, to sleep, to play, to walk, to work? Is there any thing in all these worthy of a reasonable soul, which must survive the body, and so cease from such things for ever? Think within yourselves, do you live any other life than this? What is your life, but a tedious and wearisome repetition of such brutish actions, which are only terminated on the body? O then, how miserable are you, if you have no other period to reckon

from than your birth-day ! If there be not a second birth-day before your burial, you may make your reckoning to be banished eternally from the life of God.

As for you, Christians, whom God hath quickened by the Spirit of his Son, be much in the exercise of this life, and that will maintain and advance it. Let your care be about your spirits; and to hearten you in this study, and to beget in you the hope of eternal life, look much, and lay fast hold on that life-giving Saviour, who by his righteous life, and accursed death, hath purchased by his own blood, both happiness to us, and holiness. Consider what debtors you are to him, who loved not his own life, and spared it not to purchase this life to us. Let our thoughts and affections be occupied about this high purchase of our Saviour's, which is freely bestowed on them that will have it, and believe in him for it. If we be not satisfied with such a low and wretched life as is in the body, he will give a higher and more enduring life, and only worthy of that name.

### XXX.

Verse 11.—But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

It is true, the soul is incomparably better than the body; and he is only worthy the name of a man and of a Christian, who prefers this more excellent part, and employs his study and time about it, and regards his body only for the noble guest that lodges within it. And therefore it is one of the prime consolations that Christianity affords, that it provides chiefly for the happy estate of this immortal piece in man; which truly were alone sufficient to draw our souls wholly after religion, suppose the body should never taste of the fruits of it, but die, and rise no

more, and never be awaked out of its sleep. Yet it were a sufficient ground of engagement to godliness, that the life and well-being of the far better part in man is secured for eternity, which is infinitely more than all things beside can truly promise us, or be able to perform. Certainly, whatsoever else you give your hearts to, and spend your time upon,—it either will leave you in the midst of your days, and at your end you shall be a fool; or you must leave it in the end of your days, and find yourselves as much disappointed. Or to speak more properly, because, when your time is ending, your life and being is but at its beginning, you must bid an eternal adieu to all these things whereupon your hearts are set, when you are but beginning truly to be. But this is only the proper and true good of the soul,—Christ in it;—most portable, and easily caried about with you; yea, that which makes the soul no burden to itself, and helps it to carry all things easily; and then most inseparable, for Christ in the soul is the spring of a never-ending life of peace, joy, and contemplation in the fountain of an infinite goodness, and it out-wears time and age, as well as the immortal being of the soul. Yea, such is the strength of this consolation, that then the soul is most closely united, and fully possessed of that which is its peculiar and satisfying good, when it leaves the body in the dust, and escapes out of this prison, unto that glorious liberty.

But yet there is besides this an additional comfort comprehended in the verse read,—that the sleep of the body is not perpetual, that it shall once be awakened and raised up to the fellowship of this glory; for though a man should be abundantly satisfied if he possess his own soul, “yet no man hateth his own flesh.” The soul hath some kind of natural inclination to a body suitable unto it, and in this it differs from an angel; and therefore the apostle, when he expresseth his earnest groan for the intimate presence of his soul with Christ, he subjoins this correction, “not that we desire to be unclothed, but clothed upon it,” 2 Cor. v. 1, 2, 3. If it were possible, says he,

we would be glad to have the society of the body in this glory, we would not desire to cast off those clothes of flesh, but rather that the garment of glory might be spread over all, if it were not needful, because they are old and ragged, and would not suit well ; and our earthly tabernacle is ruinous, and would not be fit for such a glorious guest to dwell in, and therefore it is needful to be taken down. Well, then, here is an overplus, and, as it were, a surcharge of consolation, that seeing for the present it is expedient to put off the present clothing of flesh, and take down the present earthly house ; yet that the day is coming, that the same clothes renewed, shall be put on, and the same house, repaired and made suitable to heaven, shall be built up ; that this mortal body shall be quickened with that same Spirit that now quickens the soul, and makes it live out of the body ; and so the sweet and beloved friends, who parted with so much pain and grief, shall meet again with so much pleasure and joy ; and as they were sharers together in the miseries of this life, shall participate also in the blessedness of the next, like Saul and Jonathan, lovely and pleasant in their lives, and though for a time separated in death, yet not always divided. Now this is the highest top of happiness, to which nothing can be added ; it is comprehensive of the whole man, and it is comprehensive of all that can be imagined to be the perfective good of man.

It is no wonder then, that the apostle reckons this doctrine of the resurrection amongst the foundations of Christianity, Heb. vi. 1, 2 ; for truly these two, the immortality of the soul, and the resurrection of the mortal body, are the two ground-stones, or pillars of true religion, which, if they be not well settled in the hearts of men, all religion is tottering and ruinous and unable to support itself. That the soul cannot taste death, or see corruption, and that the body shall but taste it, and, as it were, salute it, and cannot always abide under the power of it, these are the prime foundations upon which all Christian persuasion is built ; for without these be laid

down in the lowest and deepest part of the heart, all exhortations to an holy and righteous life are weak and ineffectual, all consolations are empty and vain; in a word, religion is but an airy speculation, that hath no consistence but in the imaginations of men: it is an house upon sand, that can abide no blast of temptation, no wave of misery, but must straightway fall to the ground. From whence is it, I pray you, that the persuasions of the gospel have so little power upon men, that the plain and plentiful publication of a Saviour is of so small virtue to stir up the heart of men to take hold on him? How comes it to pass, that the precepts and prohibitions of the Most High God, coming forth under his authority, lay so little restraint on men's corruptions? That so few will be persuaded to stop their course, and come off the ways that they are accustomed to? That men pull away the shoulder and stop the ear, and make their hearts as adamant, incapable of being affected with either the authority or love of the gospel? That when he pipes unto us, so few dance, and when he mourns, so few lament? Is it not because these two foundations are not laid, and men's hearts not digged deep by earnest consideration, to receive these ground-stones of Christianity,—the belief of their soul's eternal survivance after the dust, and of the revivance and resurrection of the body, after it hath slept a while in the dust? I remember heathens have had some noble and rare conceptions about virtue, and some have laboured to enamour men with the native beauty of it, and to persuade them that it was a sufficient reward to itself. And truly it would far more become a Christian, who knoweth the high and divine pattern of holiness to be God himself, and so must needs behold a far surpassing beauty and excellency in the image of God, than in all earthly things; I say, it will become him to accustom himself to a dutiful observance of religion, even without all respect to the reward of it. He would train his heart to do homage to God, out out of a loyal affection and respect to his Majesty, and from the love of the very intrinsic beauty of obedience,

without borrowing always from such selfish considerations of our own happiness or misery. Notwithstanding, such is the posture of man's spirit now, that he cannot at all be engaged to the love of religion, except some seen advantage conciliate it; and therefore the Lord makes use of such selfish principles in drawing men to himself, and keeping them still with him. And truly, considering man's infirmity, this is the spirit and life of all religion,—immortality and resurrection; that which gives a lustre to all, and quickens all; that which makes all to sink deep, and that which makes a Christian stedfast and immoveable, 2 Cor. v. 8. It is certainly hope that is the key of the heart, that opens and shuts it to any thing. There the apostle Peter, 1st Epistle, first blesseth God heartily for the new birth, and in the expressing of it, makes hope the very term of that generation, and so it must be a substantial thing,—“Blessed be God, who hath begotten us again to a lively hope.” Hope hath a quickening power in it. It makes all new where it comes, and is full of spirit. It is the helmet and anchor of a Christian,—that which bears the dint of temptation, and makes him steady in religion. No man will put in his plough in this ground, or sow unto the Spirit, but in hope; for he that soweth must sow in hope, else his plough will not go deep, 1 Cor. ix. 10. This, then, is the very spirit and life of religion, “the resurrection of the dead,” without which “our faith were in vain,” and men would continue still in their sins. Certainly, it is the deep inconsideration of this never-ending endurance of our souls, and restitution of our bodies to the same immortality, that makes the most part of men so slight and superficial in religion, else it were not possible, if that were laid to heart, but men would make religion their business, and chief business.

We have here the two genuine causes of the resurrection of the bodies of Christians,—the resurrection of Christ, and the inhabitation of his Spirit. The influence that the resurrection of Christ hath on ours, is lively and fully holden out by this apostle, 1 Cor. xv., against them who

deny the resurrection from the dead,—“If Christ be not raised, your faith is in vain, you are yet in your sins, and they that are asleep are perished.” Religion were nothing but a number of empty words of show; preaching were a vanity and imposture; faith were a mere fancy, if this be not laid down as the ground-stone,—Christ raised, not as a natural person, but as a common politic person, as “the first fruits of them that sleep,” vers. 17—20, where he alludes to the ceremony of offering the first fruits of their harvest. Lev. xxiii. 10; for under the law they might not eat of the fruits of the land till they were sanctified; all was counted profane till they were someway consecrated to the Lord. Now, for this end, the Lord appointed them to bring one sheaf for all, and that was the representative of all the rest of the heap, and this was waved before the Lord, and lifted up from the earth. Now, according to the apostle’s argument, Rom. xi. 16, “If the first fruits be holy, so is the lump,” for it represents all the lump; and therefore Jesus Christ, the chief of all his brethren, was made the first fruits from the dead, and lifted up from the grave, as the representer of all the lump of his elect; and so it must needs follow, that they shall not continue in the grave, but must in due time partake of that benefit which he has first entered in possession of, in their name, and for them: for if this first fruits be holy, so the whole lump must be holy; and if the first fruits be risen, so must the lump. You see, then, the force of the present reason, “if the Spirit that raised Christ dwell in you, he shall also raise you,” namely, because he raised up Christ, the very first fruits of all the rest; so that Christ’s resurrection is a sure pledge and token of yours, and both together are the main basis and groundwork of all your hope and salvation, the neglect and inconsideration whereof makes the most part of pretended Christians to walk according to that Epicurean principle, “let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die.” As if there were no life to come, they withhold nothing from their carnal minds, that can satisfy or please their lusts.

But for you who desire a part in this resurrection, and dare scarcely believe so great a thing, or entertain such a high hope, because of the sight of your unworthiness ; as you would be awakened by this hope to “righteousness, and to sin no more,” verse 34 of that chapter, so you may encourage yourselves to that hope, by the resurrection of Christ ; for it is that which hath the mighty influence to beget you to a lively hope, 1 Pet. i. 3. Look upon this as the grand intent and special design of Christ’s both dying and rising again,—that he might be the first fruits to sanctify all the lump. Nevertheless, it is not the defect of your bodies, for they are often a great impediment and retardment to the spirit, and lodgeth the enemy within their walls, when he is chased out of the mind by the law of the Spirit of life ; but it is the great design of God, through the whole work of redemption, and the desert of Christ your head : and therefore you may entertain that hope, but take heed to walk worthy of it, and that is,—if we have this hope, let us purify ourselves, let us who believe that we are risen with Christ, set our affections on things above, else we dishonour him that is risen in our name, and we dishonour that temple of the Holy Ghost, which he will one day make so glorious.

## XXXI.

Verse 11.—But if the Spirit of him that raised up Christ from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

As there is a twofold death, the death of the soul, and the death of the body, so there is a double resurrection, the resurrection of the soul from the power of sin, and the resurrection of the body from the grave. As the first death is that which is spiritual, then that which is bodily ; so the first resurrection is of the spirit, then the second of the body, and these two have a connexion together ;



therefore, saith the apostle John, "Blessed are they who have part in the first resurrection, for on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests to God," &c. Rom. ii. 6. Although death must seize on their bodies, yet the sting wherein the strength of it lies, is taken away by Christ; that it hath no power to hurt him whose spirit is raised out of the grave of sin. And truly it is hard to tell which is the greatest change, or the most difficult,—to raise a body out of corruption to life, or to raise a soul out of sin to grace. But both are the greatest changes that can be, and shadowed out under the similitude of the greatest in nature; for our conversion to God is a new birth, a new creation, and a resurrection in Scripture style; and so both require one and the same power, the almighty power of his Spirit,—“you who were dead in sin hath he quickened,” &c. O what a notable change! It maketh them no longer the same men, but new creatures; and therefore it is the death of sin, and the resurrection of the soul; for as long as it is under the chains of darkness and power of sin, it is free among the dead,—it is buried in the vilest sepulchre. Old graves, and these full of rottenness and dead men's bones, are nothing to express the lamentable case of such a soul; and yet such are all by nature. Whatsoever excellency or endowment men may have from their birth or education, yet certainly they are but apparitions rather than any real substances; and, which is worse, their bodies the sepulchre of their souls; and if the corruption of a soul were sensible, we would think all putrefactions of bodily things but shadows of it; and therefore no sooner is there any inward life begotten in a soul, but this is the very first exercise of it,—the abhorrency of the soul upon the sight and smell of its own loathsomeness.

Now, there is no hope of any reviving. Though all the wisdom and art of men and angels were employed in this business, there is nothing able to quicken one such soul, until it please the Lord to speak such a word as he did to Lazarus, “arise, come forth,” and send his Spirit to ac-

comply his word, and this will do it. When the Spirit cometh into the soul, he quickeneth it, and this is the first resurrection. O blessed are they who have part in this! whose souls are drawn out of the dungeon of darkness and ignorance, and brought forth to behold this glorious light that shineth in the gospel, and raised out of the grave of the lusts of ignorance, to live unto God henceforth. For such—they have their part in the second resurrection to life, for you see these are conjoined, “If the Spirit dwell in you, he shall raise you,” &c. You see here two grounds and reasons of the resurrection of the body,—Christ’s rising, and the Spirit’s indwelling. Now I find these in the Scripture made the two fountains of all Christianity, both of the first and second resurrection.

The resurrection of Christ is an evidence of our justification, the cause of our quickening or vivification, and the ground and pledge of our last resurrection: and all these are grounds of strong consolation. The first you have, Rom. iv. 52, “Christ died for our sins, and rose for our justification;” and the 34th verse of this chapter, “Christ is dead, yea rather, has risen again;” who then shall condemn? Here is a clear evidence that he hath paid the debt wholly, and satisfied justice fully. Since he was under the power of death, imprisoned by justice, certainly he would not have won [*i. e.* got] free, if he had not paid the uttermost farthing: therefore his glorious resurrection is a sure manifestation of his present satisfaction,—it is a public acquittance and absolution of him from all our debt, and so by consequence, of all he died for; for their debt was laid upon him, and now he is discharged; and therefore the believing soul may tremblingly boast, who shall condemn me; for it is God that justifieth? Why? because all my sins were laid on Christ, and God hath in a most solemn manner acquitted and discharged him from all, when he raised him from the dead; and therefore he cannot, and none other can sue for me, or prosecute a plea against me, since my Cautioner is fully exonerated of this undertaking, even by the great Creditor, God himself.

But then, his resurrection is a pawn or pledge of the spiritual raising of the soul from sin. As the death of Christ is made the pledge of our dying to sin, so his rising, of our living to God, Rom. vi. 4, 5. These are not mere patterns and examples of spiritual things, but assured pledges of the divine virtue and power, which he, being raised again, should send abroad throughout the world. For, as there are coronation gifts, when kings are solemnly installed in office, so there are coronation mercies, triumphal gifts;—when Christ rose and ascended, he bestowed them on the world, Eph. iv. And certainly these are the greatest,—the virtue of his death to kill the old man, and the power of his resurrection to quicken the new; and by faith, a believer is united and ingrafted into him, as a plant into a choice stock, and by virtue and sap coming from Christ's death and resurrection, he is transformed into the similitude of both. He groweth into the likeness of his death, by dying to sin, by crucifying these inward affections and inclinations to it; and he groweth up into the similitude of his resurrection, by newness of life, or being alive to God, in holy desires and endeavours after holiness and obedience. And thus the first resurrection of the soul floweth from Christ's resurrection.

But add unto this, that Christ's rising is the pledge and pawn of the second resurrection, that is, of the body; for he is the head, and we are the members. Now, it is most incongruous, that the head should rise and not draw up the members after him. Certainly he will not cease till he have drawn up all his members to him. If the head be above water, it is a sure pledge that the body will win [*i. e.* get] out of the water; if the root be alive, certainly the branches will shoot out in spring time,—they shall live also. There is that connexion between Christ and believers, that wonderful communication between them, that Christ did nothing, was nothing, and had nothing to him, but what he did, and was, and suffered, personating them; and all the benefit and advantage redounds to them. He would not be considered of as a person by himself,

but would rather be still taken in with the children. As for love, he came down and took flesh to be like them, and did take their sin and misery off them, and so was content to be looked upon by God as in the place of sinners, as the chief sinner; so he is content and desirous that we should look on him as in the place of sinners, as dying, as rising for us, as having no excellency or privilege incommunicable to us. And this was not hid from the church of old, but presented as the grand consolation,—“thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body they shall rise;” and therefore may poor souls awake and sing, though they must dwell in the dust, yet as the dew and influence of heaven maketh herbs to spring out of the earth, so the virtue of this resurrection shall make the earth and sea and air, to cast out and render their dead, Isa. xxvi. 19. Upon what a sure and strong chain hangs the salvation of poor sinners! I wish Christians might salute one another with this, “Christ is risen,” and so “comfort one another with these words;” or rather, every one would apply this cordial to his own heart, “Christ is risen:” and you know what a golden chain this draweth after it, therefore we must rise and live.

The other cause which is more immediate, and will actively accomplish it, is the Spirit dwelling in us; for there is a suitable method here too. As the Lord first raised the head, Christ, and will then raise the members,—and he that doth the one cannot but do the other,—so the Spirit first raiseth the soul from the woful fall into sin which killed us, and so maketh it a temple, and the body too, for both are bought with a price, and therefore the Spirit possesseth both. But the inmost residence is in the soul, and the bodily members are made servants of righteousness, which is a great honour and dignity, in regard of that base employment they had once. And so it is most suitable, that he who hath thus dwelt in both, repair his his own dwelling-house: for here it is ruinous, and therefore must be cast down. But because it was once a temple for the Holy Ghost, therefore it will be repaired and

built again. For he that once honoured it with his presence, will not suffer corruption always to dwell in it; for what Christ by his humiliation and suffering purchased, the Spirit hath this commission to perform; and what is it but the restitution of mankind to a happier estate in the second Adam, than ever the first was? Now, since our Lord, who pleased to take on our flesh, did not put it off again, but admits it to the fellowship of the same glory in heaven,—in that he died, he dies no more, death hath no more dominion over him,—he will never be wearied or ashamed of that human clothing of flesh; and therefore certainly, that the children may be like the father, the followers their captain, the members not disproportioned to the head, the branches not different and heterogeneous to the stock, and that our rising in Christ may leave no footstep of our falling, no remainder of our misery; therefore the Spirit of Christ will also quicken the mortal bodies of believers, and make them like Christ's glorious body.

This must be done with divine power,—and what more powerful than the Spirit? For it is the spirits or subtile parts in all creatures that causeth all motions, and worketh all effects. What, then, is that almighty Spirit not able to do? You have shadows of this in nature, yea, convincing evidences: for what is the spring but a resurrection of the earth? Is not the world every year renewed, and riseth again out of the grave of winter? as you find it elegantly expressed, Psal. cvii; and doth not the grains of seed die in the clods before they rise to the harvest, 1 Cor. xv. All the vicissitudes and alterations in nature, give us a plain draught of this great change, and certainly it is one Spirit that effects all.

But though there be the same power required, to raise up the bodies of the godly and ungodly; yet, O what infinite distance and difference in the nature and ends of their resurrection! There is the resurrection of life, and the resurrection of condemnation, John v. 29. O happy they who rise to life that ever they died! But, O

miserable, thrice wretched are all others, that they may not be dead for ever ! The immortality of the soul was infinite misery, because it is that which eternizes their misery ; but when this overplus is added, the incorruptibility of the body, and so the whole man made an inconsumable subject, for that fire to feed upon perpetually, what heart can conceive it without horror ? And yet we hear it often without any such affection. It is a strange life, that death is the only refreshment of it ; and yet this may not be had,—“ they shall seek death, and it shall fly from them.” Now, my beloved, I would desire this discourse might open way for the hearty and cordial entertainment of the gospel, and that you might be persuaded “ to awake unto righteousness, and sin no more.” 1 Cor. xv. 34, “ Be not deceived, my brethren, flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.” Certainly, if you have no other image than what you come into the world withal, you cannot have this hope,—to be conformed one day to the glorious body of Christ. What will become of you in that day, who declare now, by the continued vent of your hearts, that this holy Spirit dwells not in you ? And, alas ! how many are such ! O pity yourselves, your souls and bodies both ! If, for love to your bodies, you will follow its present lusts, and care only for the things of the body, you act the greatest enmity and hostility against your own bodies. Consider, I beseech you, the eternal state of both, and your care and study will run in another channel. And for you who have any working of the Spirit in you, whether convincing you of sin and misery, and of righteousness in Christ ; or sometimes comforting you by the word applied to your heart ; or teaching you another way than the world walks in, I recommend unto you that of the apostle’s, 1 Cor. xv. 58, “ Wherefore, my brethren, be stedfast, &c. always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing your labour is not in vain.”

## XXXII.

Verse 12.—Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh, &c.

ALL things in Christianity have a near and strait conjunction. It is so entire and absolute a piece, that if one link be loosed, all the chain falls to the ground, and if one be well fastened upon the heart, it brings all alongst with it. Some speak of all truths, even in nature, that they are knit so together, that any truth may be concluded out of every truth, at least by a long circuit of deduction and reasoning. But whatsoever be of that, certainly religion is a more entire thing, and all the parts of it more nearly conjoined together, that they may mutually enforce one another. Precepts and promises are thus linked together, that if any soul lay hold indeed upon any promise of grace, he draws alongst with it the obligation of some precept to walk suitable to such precious promises. There is no encouragement you can indeed fasten upon, but it will join you as nearly to the commandment; and no consolation in the gospel, that doth not carry within its bosom an exhortation to holy walking. Again, on the other hand, there is no precept, but it should lead you straightway to a promise; no exhortation, but it is environed before and behind with a strong consolation, to make it pierce the deeper, and go down the sweeter. Therefore you see how easily the apostle digresseth from the one to the other, how sweetly and pertinently these are woven in his discourse. The first word of the chapter is a word of strong consolation, "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ;" and this, like a flood, carries all down with it, all precepts and exhortations, and the soul of a believer with them. And therefore he subjoins an exhortation to holy and spiritual walking upon that very ground. And because commandments of this nature will not float, so to speak, unless they have much water of that kind, and can-

not have such a swift course, except the tide of such encouragements flow fast; therefore he openeth that spring again in the preceding words, and letteth the rivers of consolation flow forth, even the "hope of immortality and eternal life." And this certainly will raise up a soul that was on ground, and carry him above in motion of obedience; and therefore he may well, in the next place, stir them up to their duty, and mind them of their obligation, "therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh." To make this the more effectual, he drops it in with affection, in a sweet compellation of love and equality, "brethren." There is nothing so powerful in persuasion as love,—it will sweeten a bitter and unpleasant reproof, and make it go down more easily. Though it maketh less noise than threatenings, and severity and authority, yet it is more forcible; for it insinuates itself, and in a manner surpriseth the soul, and so preventeth all resistance. As when the sun made the traveller part with his cloak, whereas the wind and rain made him hold it faster, so affection will prevail, where authority and terror cannot. It will melt that which a stronger power cannot break. The story of Elijah, 1 Kings xix., may give some representation of this,—“The Lord was not in the strong wind, nor in the terrible earthquake, nor yet in the fire, but in the calm still voice.” The Lord hath chosen this way of publishing his grace in the gospel, because the sum of it is “love to sinners, and good will towards men.” He holds it forth in the calm voice of love, and those who are his ambassadors should be clothed with such an affection, if they intend to prevail with men, to engage their affections. O that we were possessed with that brotherly love one towards another, for the salvation one of another! especially, that the preachers of the gospel might be thus kindly affectioned toward others, and that you would take it thus, the calling you off the ways of sin, as an act of the greatest love. But then consider the equality of this obligation, for there is nothing pressed upon you, but what lieth as heavily upon them that presseth it. This debt binds all. O that the minis-



ters of the gospel could carry the impression of this on their hearts, that when they persuade others, they may withal persuade themselves; and when they speak to others, they may sit down among the hearers! If an apostle of so eminent dignity levelleth himself in this consideration, "therefore, brethren, we are debtors;" how much more ought pastors and teachers to come in the same rank and degree of debt and obligation with others. Truly, this is the great obstruction of the success of the gospel, that those who bind burdens on others, do not themselves touch them with one of their fingers; and while they seem serious in persuading others, yet withal declare by their carriage, that they do not believe themselves what they bear upon others; so that preaching seemeth to be an imposture, and affected persuading of others, to be borrowed, as it were in a scene, to be laid down again out of it. But then again, there is a misconceit among people, that this holy and spiritual walking is not of common obligation, but peculiar to the preachers of the gospel. Many make their reckoning so, as if they were not called to such high aims and great endeavours; but truly, my beloved, this is a thing of common concernment. The Holy Ghost hath levelled us all in this point of duty, as he hath equally exalted all in the most substantial dignities and privileges of the gospel. This bond is upon the highest and upon the lowest; greatness doth not exempt from it, and meanness doth not exclude from it. Though commonly great persons fancy an immunity from the strictness of a holy conversation, because of their greatness, and often mean and low persons pretend a freedom from such a high obligation, because of their lowness; yet certainly all are debt-bound this way, and must one day give account. You that are poor and unlearned, and have not received great things of that nature from God, do not think yourselves free; do not absolve yourselves, for there is infinite debt besides that. You will have no place for that excuse, that you had no great parts, were not learned, and so forth; for as the obligation reaches you all, so there

is as patent a way to the exercise of religion in the poorest cottage, as in the highest palace. You may serve God as acceptably in little as others may do in much. There is no condition so low and abject, that layeth any restraint on this noble service and employment. This jewel loses not its beauty and virtue, when it lieth in a dunghill, more than when it is set in gold.

But let us inquire into this debt,—“we are debtors,” saith he; and he instanceth what is not the creditor, by which he giveth us to understand, who is the true creditor: “not the flesh,” and therefore to make out the just opposition, it must be “the Spirit:” we are debtors then to the Spirit. And what is the debt we owe to him? We may know it that same way, we owe not to the flesh so much as to make us live after its guidance and direction, and fulfil its lusts; then, by due consequence, we owe so much to the Spirit, as that we should live after the Spirit, and resign ourselves wholly to him, his guidance and direction. There is a twofold kind of debt upon the creature, one remissible and pardonable, another irremissible and unpardonable, so to speak,—the debt of sin, and that is the guilt of it, which is nothing else than the obligation of the sinner over to eternal condemnation, by virtue of the curse of God. Every sinner cometh under this debt to divine justice, the desert of eternal wrath, and the actual ordination, by a divine sentence, to that wrath. Now indeed, this debt was insoluble to us, and utterly unpayable, until God sent his Son to be our cautioner, and he hath payed the debt in his own person, by bearing our curse, and so made it pardonable to sinners, obtained a relaxation from that woful obligation to death; and this debt, you see, is wholly discharged to them that are in Christ, by another sentence repealing the former curse; verse 1, “There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ.” But there is another debt which I may call a debt of duty and obedience, which, as it was antecedent to sin, even binding innocent Adam; so the obligation of the debt of sin hath been so far from taking it away, that

it is rather increased exceedingly, and this debt is unpardonable and indispensable; the more of the debt of sin be pardoned, and the more the curse be dispensed with, the more the sinner owes of love and obedience to God. "She loved much because much was forgiven;" and the more was forgiven of sin, the more she owed of love, and the more debt was discharged, the more she was indebted to him. And therefore, after this general acquittance of all believers, verse 1, he presseth this obligation the more strongly, "therefore, brethren, we are debtors." It is like that debt spoken of, Rom. xii. "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another," which is not meant that it is unlawful to be debtors to men, but rather, what ye owe, or all things else, pay it, and ye are free, your debt ceases, and your bond is cancelled; but as for the debt of love and benevolence, you must so owe that to all men, as never to be discharged of it, never to be freed from it. When you have done all, this hath no limitation of time or action. Even so it is here. Other debts, when paid, men cease to be debtors, then they are free; but here the more he pays, the more he is bound to pay,—he oweth, and he oweth eternally. His bond is never cancelled as long as he continues a creature subsisting in God, and abides a redeemed one in Christ; for these continuing, his obligation is eternally recent and fresh as the first day. And this doth not all obscure the infinite grace of God, or diminish the happiness of saints, that they are not freed from this debt of love and obedience, but rather illustrates the one, and increases the other; for it cannot be supposed to consist with the wisdom and holiness of God to loose his creature from that obligation of loving obedience and subjection which is essential to it; and it is no less repugnant to the happiness of the creature to be free from righteousness, unto sin.

Now, this debt of duty and obedience hath a threefold bond, which, because they stand in vigour uncanceled from all eternity, therefore the obligation arising from them is eternal too. The bond of creation, the bond of

redemption, and the bond of sanctification,—these are distinguished according to the persons of the Trinity who appear most eminently in them.

We owe our being to the Father, in whom we live and move and have our being; for he made us, and not we ourselves, and we are all the works of his hands. Now the debt accruing from this is infinite. If men conceive themselves so much obliged to others for a petty courtesy, as to be their servants; if they owe more to their parents, the instruments of their bringing forth into the world, O how infinitely more owe we to God, of whom we are, and have all! Doth the clay owe so much to the potter, who doth not make it, but fashion it only? And what owe we to him that made us of nothing, and fashioned us while we were yet without form! Truly, all relations, all obligations vanish when this cometh forth; because all that a man hath is less than himself, than his immortal spirit, and that he oweth alone to God; and, besides, whatsoever debt there is to other fellow-creatures in any thing, God is the principal creditor in that bond. All the creatures are but the servants of this King, which at his sole appointment bring along his gifts unto us; and therefore we owe no more to them than to the hands of the messenger that is sent. Now, by this account, nothing is our own, not ourselves, not our members, not our goods, but all are his, and to be used and bestowed, not at the will and abutment of creatures, but to be absolutely and solely at his disposal, who hath the sole sovereign right to them; and therefore, you may take up the heinousness of sin, how monstrous and misshapen a thing it is, that breaks this inviolable law of creation, and withdraws the creature from subjection to him, in whom alone it can subsist. O how disordered are the courses and lives of men! Men living to themselves, their own lusts, after their own will, as if they had made themselves; men using their members as weapons of unrighteousness against God, as if their tongues, and hands, and feet were their own or the devil's, and not God's. Call to mind

this obligation, "Remember thy Creator,"—that memento would be a strong engagement to another course than most take. 'How absurd would you think it, to please yourselves in displeasing him, if you but minded the bond of creation. But when there are other two superadded,—what we owe to the Son, for coming down in the likeness of sinful flesh for us, and what we owe to the Holy Ghost for quickening our spirits, and afterward for the resurrection of our bodies,—whose hearts would not these overcome and lead captive to his love and obedience!

### XXXIII.

Vers. 12. 13.—Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh; for if ye live after the flesh ye shall die, &c.

Was it not enough to contain men in obedience to God, the very essential bond of dependence upon God as the original and fountain of his being! And yet man hath cast away this cord from him, and withdrawn from that allegiance he did owe to his Maker, by transgressing his holy commandments. But God, not willing that all should perish, hath confirmed and strengthened that primitive obligation, by two others as strong, if not more. If the Father did most eminently appear in the first, the Son is manifested in the second; and that is the work of the redemption of man, no less glorious than his first creation. He made him first, and then he sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, to make him again by his Spirit: and now a threefold cord is not easily broken. It seems this should bind invincibly, and constrain us not to be our own, but the Lord's: and now truly, they who are in Jesus Christ, are thrice indebted wholly to God. But the two last obligations are the most special, and most wonderful,—that God sent his Son for us, to redeem us from sin and

misery, and to restore man to happiness, took on a miserable and accursed habit; that so glorious a person gave himself for so base an one; that so excellent a Lord became a servant for the rebel; that he whose the earth is, and the fulness thereof, did empty himself of all to supply us; and, in a word, the most wonderful exchange he made that ever the sun saw,—God for men, his life a ransom for their life. All the rare inventions, and fancied stories of men, come infinitely short of this. The light never saw majesty so abased, and love so expressed, as in this matter; and all to this purpose,—that we who had undone ourselves, might be made up again, and the righteousness of the law fulfilled in us. At first he made us, but it cost him nothing but a word; but now, to buy that which was taken captive by sin, and at so dear a rate,—“ye are bought with a price,” and this price more precious than the sum of heaven and earth could amount to. Suppose by some rare alchemy the earth were all converted into gold, and the heavens into precious stones; yet these corruptible and material things come as far short of this ransom, as an heap of dung is unproportioned to a mass of gold or heap of jewels. Now, you that are thus bought, may ye not conclude, “therefore we are debtors;” and whereof? Of ourselves, for we, our person, estates, and all, were sold, and all are bought with this price; therefore we are not our own, but the Lord’s, and therefore we ought “to glorify God in our bodies and spirits, which are his,” 1 Cor. vi. 20. Should we henceforth claim an interest and property in ourselves? Should we have a will of our own? Should we serve ourselves with our members? O how monstrous and absurd were that! Certainly, a believing heart cannot but look upon that as the greatest indignity and vilest impiety that ever the sun shined upon. Ingratitude hath a note of ignominy, even among heathens, put upon it; they esteemed the reproach of it the compend of all reproaches, *ingratum si dixeris, omnia dixeris*. And truly it hath the most abominable visage of any vice; yea, it is all sins drawn

through other in one table. Certainly, a godly heart cannot but account this execrable and detestable, henceforth to have any proper and peculiar will and pleasure, and cannot but devote itself wholly to his will and pleasure, for whose pleasure all were first created, and who then redeemed us by the blood of his Son. I wish we could have this image of ingratitude always observant to our eyes and minds, when we are enticed with our lusts to study our own satisfaction. But there is another bond superadded to this, which mightily aggravates the debt. He hath given us his Spirit to dwell within, as well as his Son for us. And O the marvellous and strange effects that this Spirit hath in the favours of men! He truly repairs that image of God, which sin broke down; he furnisheth the soul, and supplies it in all its necessities; he is a light and life to it, a spring of everlasting life and consolation; so that to the Spirit we owe that we are made again after his image, and the precious purchase of Christ applied unto our souls; for him hath our Saviour left to execute his latter-will in behalf of his children. And these things are but the first fruits of the Spirit. Any peace, or joy, or love, or obedience, are but an earnest of that which is coming. We shall be yet more beholden to him. When the walls of flesh are taken down, he will carry forth the soul into that glorious liberty of the sons of God; and not long after he shall quicken our very dust, and raise it up in glory to the fellowship of that happiness. Now, my beloved, consider what all this tends to. Mark the inference you should make from it, "therefore we are debtors," debtors indeed, under infinite obligations for infinite mercies. But what is the debt we owe? Truly it might be conceived to be some rare thing, equivalent to such inconceivable benefits. But mark what it is, "to live after the Spirit, and not after the flesh,"—to conform our affections and actions, and the tenor of our way and course, to the direction of the Spirit,—to have our spirits led and enlightened by the Holy Spirit, and not to follow the indictment of our flesh

and carnal minds. Now truly, it is a wonder that it is no other thing than this, for this is no other thing than what we owe to ourselves, and to our own natures, so to speak; for truly there is a conformity and suitableness of some things to the very nature of man, that is beautiful. Some things are decent and becomes it, other things are undecent and uncomely, unsuitable to the very reasonable being of man, so that they put a stain and blot upon it.

Now, indeed, there is nothing can be conceived more agreeable to the very constitution of man's nature than this,—that the far better and more excellent part should lead and command, and the baser and earthly part should obey and follow,—that the flesh should minister and serve the Spirit; doth not even nature itself teach it? And yet, no heavier yoke is put upon us, than what our own nature hath put upon us already, which indeed is wonderful. And certainly this wonderful attempering of his laws unto the very natural exigence of the spirit of man, makes the transgression of them so much the more heinous.

Now, all these three forementioned bonds do jointly bind on this law upon man; in general, they oblige strongly to subjection and obedience to the will of God; but particularly, they have a constraining influence upon this living after the Spirit, and not after the flesh. Our very creation speaks this forth. When God made man after his own image, when he beautified the spirit of man with that divine similitude and likeness, in that he breathed a spirit from heaven, and took a body out of the dust, and then exalted that heavenly piece to some participation of his own nature; doth not all this cry aloud upon us, that the order of creation is now dissolved, that the beauty of it is marred, that all is turned upside down, when men's passions and senses are their only guides, and the principles of light in their conscience are choked and stifled? Doth not all this teach us plainly that we should not live after the flesh? That we owe not so much to this brutish part, as to enthrone it and empower it over us? That it



were vilest anarchy, and most intolerable confusion and usurpation, to give it the power over us, as most men do? That there can be no order or beauty in man, till the spirit be unfettered from the chains of fleshly lusts, and restored to the native dignity and pre-eminency, and so keep the body in subjection? And indeed Paul was so, 1 Cor. ix. 27, "I keep my body in subjection, and beat it down," because it is an imperious slave, an usurping slave, and will command if not beaten and kept under.

Again, Christ hath put a bond upon us to this very same. He hath strengthened this obligation with a new cord, in that he gave his precious life a ransom for the souls of men. This was the principal thing he paid for, the body being only an accessory and appendix to the soul, for it is said, "The redemption of the soul is precious, and ceaseth for ever," Psal. xlix. 8; and, "What can a man give in exchange for his soul," Mark viii. 37. For what material thing can equalize a spirit? Many things may be had more precious and fine than the body, but all of them have no proportion to a spiritual being. Now then, in that so dear a ransom, and so infinite a price must be given for the spirit of man, it declares the infinite worth and excellency of it above the body, and above all visible things: and here is indeed the greatest confirmation that can be imagined. God hath valued it he hath put the soul of man in the balance, to find something equal in weight of dignity and worth, and when all that is in heaven and earth is put in the other scale, the soul is down weight by far. There is such distance, that there is no proportion. Only the life and blood of his own Son weighs it down, and is an overvalue. And thus in our redemption we have a visible demonstration, as it were, of the infinite obligation of this law, not to live after that contemptible part, our flesh, but to follow after the motions and directions of an enlightened spirit; not to spend our thoughts, care, and time upon the body, and making provision for the lusts thereof, as most men do, and all by nature are now inclined to do, but to be

taken up with the immortal precious jewel that is within, how to have it rubbed and cleansed from all the filth that sin and the flesh hath cast upon it; and restored to that native beauty, the image of God in righteousness and holiness. If you in your practice and affection turn the scales otherwise, and make the body and the things of the body, suppose the whole world, down weigh in your affection and imagination, you have plainly contradicted the just measure of the sanctuary, and in effect you declare that Christ died in vain, and gave his life out of an error and mistake of the worth of the soul. You say, he needed not have given such a price for it, seeing every day you weigh it down with every trifle of momentary fleshly satisfaction.

Lastly, the Spirit binds this fast upon us; for the soul of man he hath chosen for his habitation, and there he delights to dwell, in the heart of the contrite and humble; and this he intends to beautify and garnish, and to restore it to that primitive excellency it once had. The spirit of man is nearer his nature, and more capable of being conformed unto it; and therefore his peculiar and special work is about our spirits. First, to enlighten and convince them; then, to reform, and direct, and lead them. And this binds as forcibly, and constraineth a believer certainly to resign himself to the Spirit; to study how to order his walk after that direction, and to be more and more abstracted from the satisfaction of his body; else he cannot choose but grieve the Spirit, his best friend, which alone is the fountain of joy and peace to him, and being grieved, cannot but grieve himself next.

Now, my beloved, consider, if you owe so much to the flesh, whether or not it be so steadable and profitable unto you. And if you think it can give you a sufficient reward to compensate all your pains in satisfying it, go on; but I believe you can reckon no good office that ever it did you, and your expectation is less. What fruit have you of all, but shame and vexation of conscience? And what can you expect but death, the last fruits of it?

What then do you owe unto it? Are you debtors to its pleasure and satisfaction, which hath never done you good, and will do you eternal hurt? Consider whether you are so much bound and obliged to it, as to lose your souls for it? One of them must be; and whether or not you be not more obliged to God the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, to live after the Spirit, though for the present it should be painful to beat down your body. You are debtors indeed, but you owe nothing to the flesh but stripes and mortification.

## XXXIV.

Ver. 13.—For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

THOUGH the Lord, out of his absolute sovereignty, might deal with man in such a way as nothing should appear but his supreme will and almighty power: he might simply command obedience, and without any more persuasions, either leave men to the frowardness of their own natures, or else powerfully constrain them to their duty; yet he hath chosen that way that is most suitable to his own wisdom, and most connatural to man's nature, to lay out before him the advantages and disadvantages, and to use these as motives and persuasives of his Spirit. For since he hath by his first creation, implanted in man's soul such a principle as moveth itself upon the presentation of good or evil; that this might not be in vain, he administers all the dispensations of the law and gospel in a way suitable to that, by propounding such powerful motives as may incline and persuade the heart of man. It is true, there is a secret drawing withal, necessary. They pull off the Father's arm, and power of the Holy Ghost; yet that which is visible or sensible to the soul is the framing of all things so as to engage it upon rational terms. It is set between two contraries, death and life,—

death, which it naturally abhorreth, and life, which it naturally loveth. An even balance is holden up before the light of the conscience, in which obedience and sin are weighed, and it is found even to the convincing of the spirit of man, that there are as many disadvantages in the one as advantages in the other.

This was the way that God used first with man in paradise. You remember the terms run so, "what day thou eatest thou shalt die." He hedged him on one side by a promise of life, on the other by a threatening of death: and these two are very rational restraints, suited to the soul of man, and in the inward principles of it, which are a kind of instinct to that which is apprehended good or gainful.

Now, this verse runs even so in the form of words, "If ye live after the flesh ye shall die." You see this method is not changed under the gospel; for indeed it is natural to the spirit of man, and he hath now much more need of all such persuasions, because there is a great change of man's inclination to the worst side. All within is so disordered and perverse, that a thousand hedges of persuasive grounds cannot do that which one might have done at first. Then they were added out of superabundance, but now out of necessity. Then they were set about man to preserve him in his natural frame and inclinations, but now they are needful to change and alter them quite, which is a kind of creation; therefore saith David, "create in me a new spirit." And therefore the gospel abounds in variety of motives and inducements, in greater variety of far more powerful inducements than the law. Here is that great persuasion taken from the infinite gain or loss of the soul of man, which if any thing be able to prevail, this must do, seeing it is seconded with some natural inclination in the soul of man to seek its own again. Yet there is a difference between the nature of such like promises and threatenings in the first covenant and in the second. In the first covenant, though life was freely promised, yet it was immediately annexed to perfect

obedience, as a consequent reward of it,—it was firstly promised unto complete righteousness of men's persons. But in the second covenant, firstly and principally life, eternal grace and glory, is promised to Jesus Christ and his seed, antecedent to any condition or qualification upon their part. And then again, all the promises that run in way of condition, as “he that believeth shall not perish,” &c.—“if ye walk after the Spirit ye shall live;” these are all the consequent fruits of that absolute gracious disposition and resignation of grace and life to them whom Christ hath chosen; and so their believing, and walking, and obeying, cometh in principally as parts of the grace promised. and as witnesses and evidences, and confirmations of that life which is already begun, and will not see an end. Besides that, by virtue of these absolute promises made to the seed of Christ, and Christ's complete performance of all conditions in their name, the promises of life are made to faith principally, which hath this peculiar virtue, to carry forth the soul to another's righteousness and sufficiency, and to bottom it upon another; and in the next place, to holy walking, though mixed with many infirmities, which promise in the first covenant was only annexed to perfect and absolute obedience.

You heard in the preceding verse a strong inducement taken from the bond, debt, and duty we owe to the Spirit, to walk after it, and the want of all obligation to the flesh. Now, if honesty and duty will not suffice to persuade you, as you know in other things it would do with any honest man,—plain equity is a sufficient bond to him,—yet consider what the apostle subjoins from the damage, and from the advantage which may of itself be the topics of persuasion, and serves to drive in the nail of debt and duty to the head. If you will not take with this debt you owe to the Spirit, but still conceive there is some greater obligation lying on you, to care for your bodies and satisfy them; then, I say, behold the end of it, what fruit you must one day reap of the flesh and service of sin—“if ye live after the flesh, you shall die.” But then consider the fruit you shall reap of the Spirit and holy walking,—“you shall

live." It is true, the flesh may flatter you more for the present, but the end of it will be bitter as death, *amplectitur ut strangulet*, "the flesh embraces you that it may strangle you;" and so if you knew all well, you would not think you owed it anything but enmity, and hatred, and mortification. If your duty will not move you, let the love of yourselves and your souls persuade you, for it is an irrevocable statute, "the wages of sin is death." Every way you choose to fulfil the lusts of your flesh, and to make provision for it, neglecting the eternal welfare of your souls, certainly it shall prove to you the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, it shall be as the forbidden fruit, which, instead of performing what was promised, will bring forth death, the eternal separation of the soul from God. Adam's sin was a breviary or epitome of the multiplied and enlarged sins of mankind. You may see in this tragedy all your fortunes, so to speak. You may behold in it the flattering insinuations and deceitful promises of sin and Satan, "who is a liar and murderer from the beginning," and murdered man at first by lying to him. You find the hook covered over with the varnished bait of an imaginary life and happiness: satisfaction promised to the eye, to the taste, and to the mind; and upon these enticements, man bewitched and withdrawn from his God, after these vain and empty shadows; which, when he caught hold upon, he himself was caught and laid hold upon by the wrath of God, by death and all the miseries before it or after it. Now, here is the map of the world; for all that is in the world, is but a larger volume of that same kind, "the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life!" Albeit they have been known and found to be the most notable and gross deceivers; and every man, after he hath spent his days in pursuit and labour for them, is constrained to acknowledge at length, though too late, that all that is in the world is but an imposture, a delusion, a dream, and worse; yet every man hearkens after these same flatteries and lies, that hath cast down so many wounded, and made so many

strong ones to fall by them. Every man trusts the word and his own flesh, as if they were of good report, and of known integrity: and this is men's misery, that no man will learn wisdom upon other expenses, upon the woful and tragical example of so many others, but go on as confidently now, after the discovery of these deceivers, as if this were the first time they had made such promises, and used such fair words to men. Have they not been these six thousand years almost deluding the world? And have we not as many testimonies of their falsehood, as there hath been persons in all ages before us? After Adam hath tasted of this tree of pleasure, and found another fruit growing on it, that is, death, should the posterity be so mad as to be meddling still with the forbidden tree, and therefore forbidden, because destructive to ourselves.

Know then and consider, beloved in the Lord, that you shall reap no other thing of all your labours and endeavours after the flesh, all your toiling and perplexing cares, all your excessive pains in the making provision for your lusts, and caring for the body only,—you shall reap no other harvest of all, but death and corruption. Death, you think, that is a common lot, and you cannot eschew it however. Nay, but the death here meant is of another sort, in respect of which you may call death life. It is the everlasting destruction of the soul from the presence of God, and the glory of his power. It is the falling of that infinite weight of the wrath of the Lamb upon you, in respect of which, mountains and hills will be thought light, and men would rather wish to be covered with them, Rev. vi. 16. Suppose now you could swim in a river of delights and pleasures, (which yet is given to none, for truly upon a just reckoning, it will be found that the anxiety, and grief, and bitterness, that is intermingled with all earthly delights, swallows up the sweetness of them); yet it will but carry you down, e'er you be aware, into the sea of death and destruction, as the fish that swim and sport for a while in Jordan, are carried down into

the dead sea of Sodom, where they are presently suffocated and extinguished. Or, as a malefactor is carried through a pleasant palace to the gallows ; so men walk through the delights of their flesh to their own endless torment and destruction.

Seeing then, my beloved, that your sins and lusts which you are inclined and accustomed to, will certainly kill you, if you enterain them ; then nature itself would teach you the law of self-defence, to kill e're you be killed, to kill sin e're it kill you, to mortify the deeds and lusts of the body, which abound among you, or they will certainly mortify you, that is, make you die. Now, if self-love could teach you this, which the love of God cannot persuade you to ; yet it is well, for being once led into God, and moved to change your course, upon the fear and apprehension of the infinite danger that will ensue ; certainly if you were but a little acquainted with the sweetness of this life, and goodness of your God, you would find the power of the former argument *a debito*, from debt and duty, upon your spirit. Let this once lead you unto God, and you will not want that which will constrain you to abide, and never to depart from him.

“ If you mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live.” As sin decays, you increase and grow ; as sins die, your souls live, and it shall be a sure pledge to you of that eternal life. And though this be painful and laborious, yet consider, that it is but the cutting off of a rotten member, that would corrupt the whole body, and the want of it will never maim or mutilate the body ; for you shall live perfectly when sin is perfectly expired, and out of life ; and, according as sin is nearer expiring and nearer the grave, your souls are nearer that endless life. If this do not move us, what can be said next ? “ What shall he do more to his vineyard ?”



## XXXV.

Vers. 13, 14.—For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

THE life and being of many things consists in union; separate them, and they remain not the same, or they lose their virtue. It is much more thus in Christianity. The power and life of it consists in the union of those things that God hath conjoined, so that if any man pretend to one thing of it, and neglect the other, he hath really none of them. And to hold to the subject in hand, there are three things, which, joined together in the hearts of Christians, have a great deal of force: the duty of a Christian, and his reward, and his dignity. His work and labour seems hard and unpleasant, when considered alone; but the reward sweetens it, when it is jointly believed. His duty seems too high, and his labour great, yet the consideration of the real dignity he is advanced unto, and privilege he has received, will raise up the spirit to great and high attempts, and to sustain great labours. Mortification is the work and labour; life, eternal life, is the reward; following the spirit is the Christian's duty, but to be the son of God, that is his dignity.

Mortification sounds very harsh at first: the hearts of men say, "It is a hard saying, who can bear it?" And indeed I cannot deny but it is so to our corrupt nature; and therefore so holden out in Scripture. The words chosen to press it, express much pain and pains, much torment and labour. It is not so easy and trivial a business to forsake sin, or subdue it, as many think, who only think it easy, because they have never tried it. It is a circumcision of the foreskin of the heart, and you know how it disabled a whole city, Gen. xxxiv., and how it enraged the heart of a tender mother, Exod. iv. 26. It is the excision or cut-

ting off a member, and these the most dear and precious, be it the right hand or right foot, which is a living death, as it were, even to kill a man while he is alive. It is a new birth, and the pains and throes of the birth are known. Regeneration certainly hath a travailing pain within it, in so much that Paul travailed in pain till it were accomplished in those, Gal. iv. 19. Though men conceive sin in pleasure, yet they cannot be rid of that deadly burden without throes and pains; and to halve his work, or to be remiss or negligent in it, is as foolish and unwise, as for a child to stay long in the place of breaking forth, as the Lord complains of Ephraim, Hos. xiii. 13, "He is an unwise son; for he should not stay long in the place of breaking forth of children." It is one of the greatest follies, not to labour by all means to be rid of the incumbrances of sin. Much violence offered to it, and a total resignation of ourselves to God, may be great pain, but it is short pain; then the pleasure is greater and continues. But now Christians lengthen their pain, and draw out their cross and vexation to a great extent, because they deal negligently in the business. They suffer the Canaanites to live, and these are thorns and briars in their sides continually. Then this business is called mortification, as the word is here, and Col. iii. 5, which imports a higher degree of pain, for the agonies of death are terrible. And to hold it out yet more, the most painful and lingering kind of death is chosen to express it,—crucifixion, Gal. v. 24. Now indeed, that which makes the forsaking of sin so grievous to flesh and blood, is, the engagement of the soul to it, the oneness that is between it and our natures, as they are now fallen; for you know pain ariseth upon the dissolution or division of any thing that is continued or united; and those things that are so nearly conjoined, it is hard to separate them without much violence. And truly, as the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, so we must offer violence to ourselves, to our lusts and inclinations, who are almost ourselves. And if you would be truly Christians, this must be your business

and employment,—to cut off those things that are dearest unto you, to cast out the very idols your hearts sacrifice unto, and if there be any thing more one with you than another, to endeavour to break the bond with that, and to be at the furthest distance with it. It is easy to persuade men to forsake some sins and courses, that they are not much inclined to, and find not much pleasure or profit by them. You may do that and be but dead in sins; but if you aim at true mortification indeed, you would consider what are the chief idols and predominant inclinations of your heart, and as to set yourself impartially against all known so particularly against the most beloved sin, because it interrupts most the communion of God, and separates from your beloved, and the dearer it be, the more dangerous certainly it is.

But to encourage and hearten you to this, I would have you look back to that former victory that Christ hath gained in our name, and look about to the assistance you have for the present, the Spirit to help you. Truly, my beloved, this will be a dead business, if you be not animated and quickened by these considerations, that Christ died to sin, and lived to God, and that in this he was a public person representing you, that so you may conclude with Paul, “I am crucified with Christ,” Gal. ii. 20; “we are buried with him by baptism into his death,” Rom. vi. 4. Consider that mystical union with Christ crucified, and life shall spring out of his cross, out of his grave, to kill sin in you. That the great business is done already, and victory gained in our head,—“this is our victory, even faith.” Believe, and then you have overcome, before you have overcome; and this will help you to overcome in your own persons. And then consider and look round about to the strong helper you have,—“the Spirit, if you through the Spirit mortify,” &c. Stronger is he that is in you, than he that is in the world; though he does not vent all his power to you, yet you may believe that there is a secret latent virtue in the seed of grace, that it cannot be wholly overcome or conquered, and there

is one engaged in the warfare with us, who will never leave us nor forsake us, who of set purpose withdraweth his help now and then, to discover our weakness to us, that we may cleave the faster to him, who never letteth sin get any power, or gather any strength, but out of wisdom, to make the final victory the more glorious; in a word, he leads us through weaknesses, infirmities, faintings, wrestlings, that his strength may be perfected in weakness, "that when we are weak, then we may be strongest in him," 2 Cor. xii. 9. Our duty then is to follow this Spirit wheresoever he leadeth us. Christ, the captain of our salvation, when he went to heaven, sent the Spirit to be our guider, to lead us thither where he is; and therefore we should resign and give up ourselves to his guidance and direction. The nature of a creature is dependence, so the very essence of a Christian consists in dependence and subordination to the Spirit of God. Nature itself would teach them that wisdom, to commit themselves to those that have it, and not to carry the reins of their own life themselves.

Truly, not only the sense of our own imperfection, of our folly and ignorance in those things that belong to life, should make us willing to yield ourselves over to the Spirit of God, as blind men to their leader, as children to their nurses, as orphans to their tutors; but also, because the Spirit is made our tutor and leader. Christ our Father hath left us to the Spirit in his latter will; and therefore, as we have absolute necessity, so he hath both willingness and ability, because it is his office. "O Lord I know," saith Jeremiah, "the way of man is not in himself; it is not in him that walketh to direct his steps," Jer. x. 23. O! it were a great point of wisdom, thus to know our ignorance and folly; and this is the great qualification of Christ's disciples,—simple as children, as little children, as void of conceit of their own wisdom, Mark x. 15. And this alone capacitates the soul to receive the impressions of wisdom; as an empty table is fittest to write upon, so a soul emptied of itself: whereas self-conceit draweth a

number of foolish senseless draughts in the mind, that it cannot receive the true image of wisdom. Thus then, when a soul finds that it hath misled itself, being misguided by the wildfire of its lusts, and hath hardly escaped perishing and falling headlong into the pit, this disposes the soul to a willing resignation of itself to one wiser and more powerful,—the Spirit of God. And so he giveth the Spirit the string of his affections and judgment to lead him by, and he walketh willingly in that way to eternal life, since his heart was enlarged with so much knowledge and love. And now having given up yourselves thus, you would carefully eye your leader, and attend all his motions, that you may conform yourself to them. Whensoever the Spirit pulleth you by the heart, draweth at your conscience, to drive you to prayer, or any such duty, do not resist that pull, do not quench the Spirit, lest he let you alone, and do not call you, nor speak to you. If you fall out thus with your leader, then you must guide yourselves, and truly, you will guide it into the pit, if left to yourselves; therefore make much of all the impulses of your conscience, of all the touches and inward motions of light and affection, to entertain these, and draw them forth in meditation and action, for these are nothing else but the Spirit your leader plucking at you to follow him, and if you sit when he riseth to walk, if you neglect such warnings, then you may grieve him, and this cannot but in the end be bitterness to you. Certainly, many Christians are guilty in this, and prejudge themselves of the present comfort and benefit of this inward anointing, that teacheth all things, and of this bosom guide that leadeth in all truth; because they are so heavy and lumpish to be led after him. They drive slowly, and take very much pressure and persuasion to any duty; whereas we should accustom ourselves to willing and ready obedience upon the least signification of his mind. Yea, and which is worse, we often resist the Holy Ghost; he draweth, and we hold beloved sins; he pulleth, and we pull back from the most spiritual duties. There is so much perverseness and frowardness yet in our

natures, that there needs the almighty draught of his arm to make it straight, as there is need of infinite grace to pardon it.

Now, my beloved, if you have in your desires and affections resigned yourselves over to the guidance of this Spirit, and this be your real and sincere endeavour to follow it, and in as far as you are carried back, or contrary, by temptation and corruption, or retarded in your motion, it is your lamentation before the Lord ; I say unto you, cheer your hearts, and lift them up in the believe of this privilege conferred upon you,—you are the sons of God. For he giveth this tutor and pedagogue to none but to his own children,—“as many as are led by the Spirit of God, are the sons of God.” Suppose you cannot exactly follow his motions, but are often driven out, or turned back ; yet hath not the Spirit the hold of your heart? Are you not detained by the cord of your judgment, and the law of your mind? And is there not some chain fastened about you, which maketh it outstrip the practice by desires and affections? “You are the sons of God,” that is truly the greatest dignity and highest privilege, in respect of which all relations may blush and hide their faces. What are all the splendid and glittering titles among men, but empty shows and evanishing sounds, in respect of this. To be called the son of a gentleman, of a nobleman, of a king, how much do the sons of men pride themselves in it? But truly, that putteth no intrinsic dignity in the persons themselves. It is a miserable poverty to borrow praise from another ; and truly he that boasts of his parentage, *aliena laudat non sua*, “he praiseth that which is another’s, not his own.” But this dignity, it is truly a dignity, it puts intrinsic worth in the person, and puts a more excellent spirit in them, than that which is in the world, as is said of Caleb ; and besides it entitles to the greatest happiness imaginable.

## XXXVI.

Vers. 14, 15.—For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, &c.

CHILDREN do commonly resemble their parents, not only in the outward proportion and feature of their countenances, but also in the disposition and temper of their spirits; and generally they are inclined to imitate the customs and carriage of their parents; so that they sometimes may be accounted the very living images of such persons, and in them men are thought to outlive themselves. Now, indeed, they that are the sons of God are known by this character, that “they are led by the Spirit of God.” And there is the more necessity, and the more reason too, of this resemblance of God, and imitation of him in his children; because that very divine birth that they have from heaven consists in the renovation of their natures, and assimilation to the divine nature; and therefore they are possessed with an inward principle, that carries them powerfully towards a conformity with their heavenly Father; and it becometh their great study and endeavour to observe all the dispositions and carriage of their heavenly Father, which are so honourable and high, and suitable to himself, that they at least may breathe and halt after the imitation of him. Therefore our Lord exhorts us, and taketh a domestic example and familiar pattern to persuade us the more by,—“Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect,” Matt. v. 48. And there is one perfection he especially recommends for our imitation, mercifulness and compassion towards men, opposed to the violence, fury, and implacableness; to the oppression, and revenge, and hatred that abound among men, Luke vi. 36. And generally in all his ways of holiness and purity, of goodness and mercy, we ought to

be followers of him, as dear children who are not only obliged by the common law of sympathy between parents and children, but, moreover, engaged by the tender affection that he carrieth to us, Eph. v. 1. Now, because God is high as heaven, and his way, and thoughts, and dispositions are infinitely above us, the pattern seems to be so far out of sight, that it is given over as desperate by many to attempt any conformity to it. Therefore it hath pleased the Lord to put his own Spirit within his own children, to be a bosom-pattern and example; and it is our duty to resign ourselves to his leading and direction. The Spirit brings the copy near hand us, and though we cannot attain, yet we should follow after. Though we cannot make out the lesson, yet we should be scribbling at it; and the more we exercise ourselves this way, setting the Spirit's direction before our eyes, the more perfect shall we be.

It is high time, indeed, to pretend to this. to be a son or a daughter of God. It is a higher word than if a man could deduce his genealogy from an uninterrupted line of a thousand kings and princes. There is more honour, true honour in it, and more profit too. It is that which enriches the poorest, and ennobles the basest, inconceivably beyond all the imaginary degrees of men. Now, my beloved, this is the great design of the gospel, to bestow this incomparable privilege upon you, "to become the sons of God." But it is sad to think how many souls scarce think upon it, and how many delude themselves in it. But consider, that "as many as are the sons of God, are led by the Spirit of God." They have gotten a new leader and guider, other than their own fancy or humour, which once they followed in the ignorance of their hearts. It is lamentable to conceive how the most part of us are acted, and driven, and carried headlong, rather than gently led, by our own carnal and corrupt inclinations; men pretending to Christianity yet hurried away with every self-pleasing object, as if they were not masters of themselves, furiously agitated by violent lusts, miscarried con-



tinually against the very dictates of their own reason and conscience. And I fear there is too much of these, even in those who have more reason to assume this honourable title of sonship. I know not how we are exceedingly addicted to self-pleasing in every thing, whatsoever our fancy or inclination suggests to us, that we must do without more bands, if it be not directly sinful. Whatsoever we apprehend, that we must vent and speak out, though to little or no edification. Like that of Solomon we deny our hearts nothing they desire, except the grossness of it restrains us. Now, certainly, if we knew what we are called to, who are the sons of God, we could not but disengage more with ourselves, even in lawful things, and give over the conduct of our hearts and ways to the Spirit of our Father, whom we may be persuaded of, that he will lead us in the ways of pleasantness and peace.

Now, the special and peculiar operations of the Spirit are expressed in the following words. There are some workings of the Spirit of God that are but introductory and subservient to more excellent works; and therefore they are transient, not appointed to continue long, for they are not his great intendment. Of this kind are those terrible representations of sin and wrath, of the justice of God, which put the soul in a fear, a trembling fear; and while such a soul is kept within the apprehension of sin and judgment, it is shut up, as it were, in bondage. Now, though it be true, that in the conversion of a sinner, there is always something of this in more or less degrees: yet because this is not the great design of the gospel, to put men in fear, but rather to give them confidence; nor the great intendment of God in the dispensation of the law, to bring a soul in bondage under terror, but rather by the gospel to free them from that bondage; therefore he hath reason to express it thus, "ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear," &c. But there are other operations of the Spirit, which are chiefly intended, and principally bestowed, as the great gift of our Father, to express his bounty and goodness to-

wards us ; and from these he is called the Spirit of adoption, and the Spirit of intercession. The Spirit of adoption, not only in regard of that witness-bearing and testimony to our consciences of God's love and favour, and our interest in it, as in the next verse, but also in regard of that child-like disposition of reverence, and love, and respect that he begets in our hearts towards God, as our Father. And from both these flows this next working, "crying, Abba Father," aiding and assisting us in presenting our necessities to our Father, making this the continued vent of the heart in all extremities, to pour out all that burdens us in our Father's bosom. And this gives marvellous ease to the heart, and releases it from the bondage of carefulness and anxiety, which it may be subject to, after the soul is delivered from the fear and bondage of wrath.

Let us speak then to these in order. The first working of the Spirit is, to put a man in fear of himself, and such a fear as mightily straitens and embondages the soul of man. And this, though in itself it be neither so pleasant nor excellent, as to make it come under the notion of any gift from God, it having rather the nature of a torment and punishment, and being some sparkle of hell already kindled in the conscience ; yet hath made it beautiful and seasonable in its use and end, because he makes it to usher in the pleasant and refreshing sight of a Saviour, and the report of God's love to the world in him. It is true, all men are in bondage to sin and Satan, and shut up in the darkness of ignorance and unbelief, and bound in the fetters of their own lusts, which are as the chains that are put about malefactors before they go to prison. "He that commits sin is a servant of sin," John viii. 34 ; and to be a servant of sin, is slavery under the most cruel tyrant. All these things are, yet how few souls do apprehend it seriously, or are weary of their prison ! How few groan to be delivered ! Nay, the most part account it only liberty. to hate true delivery as bondage. But some there are, whose eyes the Spirit of God opens,

and lets them see their bondage and slavery, and how they are concluded under the most heavy and weighty sentence that ever was pronounced,—the curse and wrath of the everliving God, that there is no way to flee from it or escape it for any thing they can do or know. Now, indeed, this serious discovery cannot choose but make the heart of a man to tremble, as David, “My heart trembles because of thy judgments, and I am afraid of thee,” Psal. *cxix.* 120. Such a serious representation will make the stoutest and proudest heart to fall down and faint for fear of that infinite intolerable weight of deserved wrath; and then the soul is in a sensible bondage, that before was in a real but insensible bondage. Then it is environed about with bitter accusations, with dreadful challenges. Then the law of God arrests and confines the soul within the bounds of its own accusing conscience; and this is some previous representation of that eternal imprisonment and banishment from the presence of God. Albeit, many of you are free from this fear, and enjoy a kind of liberty to serve your own lusts, and are not sensible of any thralldom of your spirits; yet certainly the Lord will some time arrest you, and bring you to this spiritual bondage, when he shall make the iniquities of your heart encompass you about, and the curses of his law surround you,—when your conscience accuseth, and God condemneth, it may be, too late, and out of date.

Alas, then! what will you do, who now put your conscience by, and will not hearken to it, or be put in fear by any thing can be represented to you? We do not desire to put you in fear, where no fear is; but where there is infinite cause of fear, and when it is possible that fear may introduce faith, and be the forerunner of those glad tidings that will compose the soul: we desire only you may know what bondage you are really in, whether it be observed or not, that you may fear, lest you be enthralled in the chains of everlasting darkness, and so may be persuaded to flee from it before it be irrecoverable. What a vain and empty sound is the gospel of liberty by a Redeemer to the most part who

do not feel their bondage? Who believes its report, or cares much for it? Because it is necessity that casts a beauty and lustre upon it, or takes the scales off our eyes, and opens our closed ears.

Now, for you, who either are, or have been detained in this bondage, under the fearful apprehension of the wrath of God, and the sad remembrance of your sins, know that this is not the prime intent and grand business to torment you, as it were, before the time. There is some other more beautiful and satisfying structure to be raised out of this foundation. I would have you improve it thus, to commend the necessity, the absolute necessity of a Redeemer, and to make him beautiful in your eyes. Do not dwell upon that as if it were the ultimate or last work; but know that you are called in this rational way, to come out of yourselves into this glorious liberty of the sons of God, purchased by Christ, and revealed in the gospel. Know, "you have not received the spirit of bondage only to fear," but to drive you to faith in a Saviour; and then you ought so to walk, as not to return to that former thralldom of the fear of wrath, but believe his love.

### XXXVII.

Vers. 14, 15.—For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear: but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

THE life of Christianity, take it in itself, is the most pleasant and joyful life that can be, exempted from those fears and cares, those sorrows and anxieties, that all other lives are subject unto; for this of necessity must be the force and efficacy of true religion, if it be indeed true to its name, to disburden and ease the heart, and fill it with all manner of consolation. Certainly it is the most rich subject, and most completely furnished with all variety of delights to entertain a soul, that can be imagined. Yet,

I must confess, while we consult with the experience and practice of Christians, this bold assertion seems to be much weakened, and too much ground is given to confirm the contrary misapprehensions of the world, who take it to be a sullen, melancholic, and disconsolate life, attended with many fears and sorrows. It is, alas! too evident, that many Christians are kept in bondage, almost all their lifetime, through fear of eternal death. How many dismal representations of sin and wrath, are in the souls of some Christians, which keep them in much thralldom! At least, who is it that is not once and often brought in bondage after conversion, and made to apprehend fearfully their own estate; who hath such constant uninterrupted peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, or lies under such direct beams of divine favour, but it is sometimes eclipsed, and their souls filled with the darkness of horror and terror? And truly the most part taste not so much sweetness in religion, as makes them incessant and unwearied in the ways of godliness. Yet notwithstanding of all this, we must vindicate Christianity itself, and not impute these things unto it, which are the infirmities and faults of the followers of it, who do not improve it unto such an use, or use it so far as in itself it is capable. Indeed, it is true that often we are brought to fear again, yet withal it is certain, that our allowance is larger, and that we have received the Spirit, not to put us in bondage again to fear, but rather to seal to our hearts that love of God, which may not only expel fear, but bring in joy. I wish that this were deeply considered by all of us, that there is such a life as this attainable; that the word of God doth not deceive us in promising fair things, which it cannot perform, but that there is a certain reality in the life of Christianity, in that peace and joy, tranquillity and serenity of mind that is holden out, and that some have really found it, and do find it; and that the reason why all of us do not find it in experience, is not because it is not, but because we have so little apprehension of it, and diligence after it. It is strange, that all men who have pursued

satisfaction in the things of this life, being disappointed, and one generation witnessing this to another, and one person to another, that notwithstanding, men are this day as fresh in the pursuit of that, as big in the expectations as ever. And yet in this business of religion, and the happiness to be found in it, though the oracles of God in all ages have testified from heaven, how certain and possible it is, though many have found it in experience, and left on record to others; yet there is so slender belief of the reality and certainty of it, and so slack pursuit of it, as if we did not believe it at all. Truly, my beloved, there is a great mistake in this, and it is general too. All men apprehend other things more feasible and attainable than personal holiness and happiness in it; but truly, I conceive there is nothing in the world so practicable as this, nothing made so easy, so certain to a soul that really minds it.

Let us take it so then. The fault is not religion's, that those who profess it are subject to so much fear and care, and disquieted with so much sorrow; it is rather because Christianity doth not sink into the hearts and souls of men, but only puts a tincture on their outside, or because the faith of divine truths is so superficial, and the consideration of them so slight, that they cannot have much efficacy and influence on the heart, to quiet and compose it. Is it any wonder that some souls be subject again to the bondage of fear and terror, when they do not stand in awe to sin? Much liberty to sin will certainly embondage the spirit of a Christian to fear. Suppose a believer in Jesus Christ be exempted from the hazard of condemnation; yet he is the greatest fool in the world that would on that account venture on satisfaction to his lusts. For though it be true, that he be not in danger of eternal wrath, yet he may find so much present wrath in his conscience, as may make him think it was a foolish bargain. He may lose so much of the sweetness of the peace and joy of God as all the pleasures of sin cannot compensate. Therefore to the end that you whose souls are once paci-

fied by the blood of Christ, and composed by his word of promise, may enjoy that constant rest and tranquillity, as not to be enthralled again to your old fears and terrors, I would advise and recommend to you these two things. One is, that ye would be much in the study of that allowance which the promises of Christ afford. Be much in the serious apprehension of the gospel, and certainly your doubts and fears would vanish, at one puff of such a rooted and established meditation. Think what you are called to, not to fear again, but to love rather, and honour him as a father. And then take heed to walk suitably, and preserve your seal of adoption unblotted, unruined. You would study so to walk, as you may not cast dirt upon it, or open any gap in the conscience for the re-entry of those hellish-like fears and dreadful apprehensions of God. Certainly it is impossible to preserve the Spirit in freedom, if a man be not watchful against sin and corruption. David prays, "re-establish me with thy free Spirit;" as if his spirit had been abased, embondaged, and enthralled by the power of that corruption. If you would have your spirits kept free from the fear of wrath, study to keep them free from the power of sin, for that is but a fruit of this: and it is most suitable that the soul that cares not to be in bondage to sinful lusts, should, by the righteousness of God, tempered with love and wisdom, be brought under the bondage he would not, that is, of fear and terror; for by this means the Lord makes him know how evil the first is, by the bitterness of the second.

It is usual, on such a Scripture as this, to propound many questions, and debate many practical cases; as, whether a soul, after believing, can be under legal bondage? and wherein these differ, the bondage of a soul after believing, and in its first conversion? and how far that bondage of fear is preparatory to faith? And many such like; but I chuse rather to hold forth the simple and naked truth for your edification, than put you upon, or entertain you in such needless janglings and contentions. All I desire to say to a soul in bondage, is, to exhort him

to come to the Redeemer, and to consider that his case calls and cries for a delivery. Come, I say, and he shall find rest and liberty to his soul. All I would say to souls delivered from this bondage, is, to request and beseech them to live in a holy fear of sin, and jealousy over themselves, that so they may not be readily brought under the bondage of the fear of wrath again. Perfect love casts out the fear of hell, but perfect love brings in the fear of sin: "Ye that love the Lord, hate ill;" and if ye hate it, ye will fear it in this state of infirmity and weakness wherein we are. And if at any time ye, through negligence and carelessness of walking, lose the comfortable evidence of the Father's love, and be reduced again to our old prison of legal terror, do not despair for that, do not think that such a thing could not befall a child of God, and from that ground do not raze former foundations; for the Scripture saith not, that whosoever believes once in Christ, and receives the spirit of adoption, cannot fear again; for we see it otherwise in David, in Heman, in Job, &c., all holy saints: but the Scripture saith, "ye have not received the spirit of bondage for that end," to fear again. It is not the allowance of your Father. Your allowance is better and larger, if you knew it, and did not sit below it.

Now, the great gift, and large allowance of our Father, is expressed in the next words, "But ye have received the spirit of adoption," &c. Which spirit of adoption is a spirit of intercession, to make us cry to God as our Father. These are two gifts,—adoption, or the privilege of sons, and the spirit of adoption revealing the love and mercy of God to the heart, and framing it to a soul-like disposition. Compare the two states together, and it is a marvellous change,—a rebel condemned, and then pardoned, and then adopted to be a son of God;—a sinner under bondage, a bound slave to sin and Satan, not only from that intolerable bondage, but advanced to this liberty,—to be a son of God! This will be the continued wonder of eternity, and that whereabout the song of angels and saints will be. Accursed rebels, expecting nothing but present death,



sinner arraigned and sentenced before his tribunal, and already tasting hell in their consciences, and in fear of eternal perishing, not only to be delivered from that, but to be dignified with this privilege,—to be the sons of God ! To be taken from the gibbet to be crowned,—that is the great mystery of wisdom and grace revealed in the gospel, the proclaiming whereof will be the joint labour of all the innumerable companies above for all eternity. Now, if you ask how this estate is attainable, himself tells us, John i. 12, “ As many as believed, or received, to them he gave the privilege to be the sons of God.” The way is made plain and easy,—Christ the Son of God, the natural and eternal Son of God, became the son of man. To facilitate this, he hath taken on the burden of man’s sin, the chastisement of our peace; and so of the glorious Son of God he became like the wretched and accursed sons of men; and therefore God hath proclaimed in the gospel, not only an immunity and freedom from wrath, to all that in the sense of their own misery cordially receive him as he is offered; but the unspeakable privilege of sonship and adoption, for his sake who became our elder brother, Gal. iv. 4, 5. Men that want children, use to supply their want by adopting some beloved friend in the place of a son; and this is a kind of supply of nature for the comfort of them that want. But it is strange that God, having a Son so glorious, the very character of his person, and brightness of his glory, in whom he delighted from eternity; strange, I say, that he should in a manner lose and give away his only-begotten Son, that he might by his means adopt others, poor, despicable creatures, yea, rebellious, to be his sons and daughters. Certainly, this is an act infinitely transcending nature, such an act that hath an unsearchable mystery in it, into which angels desire to look, and never cease looking, because they never see the bottom of it. It was not out of indigency he did it, not for any need he had of us, or comfort expected from us, but absolutely for our necessity and consolation, that

he might have upon whom to pour the riches of his grace.

### XXXVIII.

Verse 15.—But ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

“BEHOLD what manner of love the Father hath shewed unto us, that we should be called the sons of God,” 1 John iii. 1. It is a wonderful expression of love, to advance his own creatures, not only infinitely below himself, but far below other creatures, to such a dignity. “Lord, what is man that thou so magnifiest him!” But it surpasseth wonder, that rebellious creatures, his enemies, should have not only their rebellions freely pardoned, but this privilege of sonship bestowed upon them! that he should take enemies, and make sons of them; and not only sons, but heirs, co-heirs with his only-begotten Son. And then, how he makes them sons is as wonderful as the thing itself, that he should make his own Son our brother, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh; and make him spring out as a branch or rod out of the dry stem of Jesse, who himself was the root of all mankind. This is the way, “God sent his Son, made of a woman, under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons,” Gal. iv. 5. The house of heaven marries with the earth, with them who have their foundation in the dust. The chief heir of that heavenly family joineth in kindred with our base and obscure family, and by this means we are made of kin to God: “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus,” 1 Cor. i 30. It behoved Christ, in a manner, to lose his own sonship as to men, to have it veiled and darkened by the super-added interest in us, and his nearness to us. He was so properly a son of man, subject to all human infirmities, except sin, that without eyes of faith, men could not per-

ceive that he was the Son of God. And by this wonderful change are we made the sons of God. Whoever, in the apprehension of their own enmity and distance from God, receive Jesus Christ, offered as the peace, the bond of union between the two families of heaven and earth, that were at an infinite odds and distance; whoever, I say, believes thus in him, and flies to him, desirous to lay down the weapons of their warfare,—their peace is not only made by that marriage which Christ made with our nature, but they are blessed with this power and privilege, to be the sons and daughters of the Most High. And from thence may conclude, that if God be your Father, you can want nothing that is good. But the determination of what is good for you, whether in spiritual enlargements, or in the things of this life, you must refer to his wisdom: for his love indeed is strong as death, nothing can quench it, in the point of reality and constancy. There is nothing to shadow it out among men. The love of women is earnest and vehement, but that is nothing to it, Isa. xlix. 15, for they may forget, but he cannot. Yet his love is not a foolish dotage, like a man that is often miscarried with fancy and lust, but it is a rational and wise affection, administered and expressed with infinite reason and wisdom; and therefore, he chooses rather to profit us than to please us in his dealings; and we who are not so fit to judge and discern our own good, should commit all to his fatherly and wise providence. Therefore, if you be tempted to anxiety and carefulness of mind, either through the earthliness of your dispositions, or the present straits of time, you who have resigned yourselves to Jesus Christ, would call to mind that your heavenly Father careth for you; and what need you care too? Why not,—use your lawful callings, be diligent in them: this is not to prejudge that; but if you believe in God, then you are obliged by that profession to abate from the superfluous tormenting thoughtfulness that is good for nothing but to make you more miserable than your troubles can make you, and to make you miserable before

you be miserable, to anticipate your sorrows. If you say, God is our Father, you are tied to devolve yourselves over on him, and trust in his good will and faithfulness, and to sit down quietly as children that have parents to provide for them.

Now, the other gift is great too,—“The spirit of adoption, and because ye are sons, therefore hath he given you the Spirit of his Son,” saith this apostle, Gal. iv. 6. And so it is a kind of confectary of the great privilege and blessed estate of adoption. They who adopt children use to give them some kind of token to express their love to them: but as the Lord is higher than all, and this privilege to be his son or child is the greatest dignity imaginable, so this gift of his Spirit suits the greatness and glory and love of our Father. It is a Father’s gift indeed, a gift suitable to our heavenly Father. If a father that is tender of the education of his child, and would desire nothing so much as that he might be of a virtuous and gracious disposition, and good engine; I think if he were to express his love in one wish, it would be this, that he might have such a spirit in him, and this he would account better than all he could leave him. But if it were possible to transmit a gracious, well-disposed understanding spirit one from another, and if men could leave it, as they do their inheritance, to their children, certainly, a wise and religious parent would first make over a disposition of that to his children. As Elisha sought a double measure of Elijah’s spirit, so a father would wish such a measure to his children, and, if it were possible, to give it. But that may not be. All that can be done is to wish well to them, and leave them a good example for imitation. But in this our heavenly Father transcends all, that he can impart his own Spirit to his adopted children, and this Spirit is in a manner the very essential principle that maketh them children of the Father. Their natures, their dispositions are under his power,—he can as well reform them, as you can change your children’s garments. He can make of us what he will. Our hearts are in his hand, as

the water, capable of any impression he pleaseth to put on it. And this is the impression he putteth on his children: He putteth his Spirit in their hearts, and writeth his law in their inward parts: a more divine and higher work than all human persuasion can reach. This Spirit they receive as an earnest of the inheritance, and withal, to make them fit for the inheritance of the saints in light.

Now, the working of this Spirit of adoption, I conceive to be threefold, beside that of intercession expressed in the verse. The first work of the Spirit of adoption, that wherein a father's affection seems to break first from underground, is, the revealing to the heart the love and mercy of God to sinners. I do not say, to such a soul in particular, for that application is neither first, nor universal. But herein the Spirit of adoption first appears from under the cloud of fear; and this is the first opening of the prison of bondage, wherein a soul was shut, when the plain way of reconciliation to God in Christ, and delivery from the bondage of sin and wrath, is holden out; when such a word as this comes into the soul, and is received with some gladness, "God so loved the world, that he gave his Son," &c.—"This is a true and faithful saying," &c.—"Come, ye that labour and are weary, and I will give rest to your souls." When a soul is made to hear the glad tidings of liberty preached to captives,—of light to the blind,—of joy to the heavy in spirit,—of life to the dead;—though he cannot come that length as to see his own particular interest, yet the very receiving affectionately and greedily such a general report as good and true, gives some ease and relaxation to the heart. To see delivery possible, is some door of hope to a desperate sinner; but to see it, and espy more than a possibility, even great probability, though he cannot reach a certainty, that will be as the breaking open of a window of light in a dark dungeon, it will be as the taking off of some of the hardest fetters and the worst chains, which makes a man almost to think himself at liberty. Now this is the great office of the Spirit of the Father,—to beget in us good thoughts of him,

to incline us to charitable and favourable constructions of him, and make us ready to think well of him, to beget a good understanding between us and him, and correct our jealous misapprehensions of him. For certainly we are naturally suspicious of God, that he deals not in sad earnest with us. Whenever we see the height of our provocation and weight of deserved indignation, we think him like ourselves, and can hardly receive without suspicion, the gospel that lays open his love in Christ to the world.

Now, this is the Spirit's work,—to make us entertain that honourable thought of God, that he is most inclinable to pardon sinners; and that his mercy is infinitely above man's sin, and that it is in no prejudice to his holiness or justice; and to apprehend seriously a constant reality and solid truth in the promises of the gospel, "and so to convince a soul of righteousness," John xvi. that there is a way of justifying a sinner and ungodly person, without wrong to God's righteousness; and this being well pondered in the heart, and received in love, the great business is done. After that, particular application is more easy, of which I shall not speak now, because occasion will be given in the next verse, about the Spirit's witnessing with our spirits, which is another of the Spirit's workings. Only I say this, that which makes this so difficult is a defect in the first. But the common principles of the gospel are not really, and so seriously apprehended, because many souls do not put to their seal to witness to the promises and truth of it; therefore the Lord often denies his seal and witness to our comfort. It is certainly a preposterous way Satan puts souls upon, first, to get such a testimony from the Spirit before they labour to get such a testimony to Christ, and echo or answer in their hearts to his word. This way seems shortest; for it would leap into the greater liberty at the first hand. But certainly it is the farthest about, because it is impossible for souls to leap immediately out of bondage to assurance, without some middle step. They cannot pass thus from extremes to extremes, without going through the middle state of

receiving Christ, and laying his word up in the heart; and therefore it proves the way furthest about, because when souls have long wearied themselves, they must at length turn in hither.

But there is another working of the Spirit I wish you were acquainted with. As the first work is to beget a suitable apprehension of God's mind and heart towards sinners, so the next is, to beget a suitable disposition in our hearts towards God as a Father. The first apprehends his love, the next reflects it back again with the heart of a sinner to him. The Spirit first brings the report of the love and grace of God to us, and then he carries the love and respect of the heart up to God.

You know how God complains in Malachi, "If I be a father, where is my fear and honour?" For these are the only fitting qualifications of children, such a reverent, respective observance of our heavenly Father, such affectionate and humble carriage towards him, as becometh both his majesty and his love. As these are tempered one with another in him, his love not abasing his majesty, and his majesty not diminishing his love; so we ought to carry, as reverence and confidence, fear and love, may be contempered one with another; so as we may neither forget his infinite greatness, nor doubt of his unspeakable love. And this inward disposition, engraven on the heart, will be the principle of willing and ready obedience. It will in some measure be our meat and drink to do our Father's will; for Christ gave us an example how we should carry towards him: how humble and obedient was he, though his only begotten Son!

### XXXIX.

Verse 15.—Whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

As there is a height of grace in bestowing such incomparably high dignities and excellent gifts on poor sinners,

such as, to make them the sons of God, who were the children of the devil, and heirs of a kingdom, who were heirs of wrath; so there is a depth of wisdom in the Lord's allowance and manner of dispensing his love and grace in this life. For though the love be wonderful, that we should be called the sons of God; yet as that apostle speaks, "it doth not yet so clearly appear what we shall be, by what we are," 1 John iii. 1. Our present condition is so unlike such a state and dignity, and our enjoyments so unsuitable to our rights and privileges, that it would not appear by the mean, low, and indigent state we are now in, that we have so great and glorious a Father. How many infirmities are we compassed about with? How many wants are we pressed withal? Our necessities are infinite, and our enjoyments no ways proportioned to our necessities. Notwithstanding, even in this the love and wisdom of our heavenly Father shews itself, and oftentimes more gloriously in the theatre of men's weakness, infirmities, and wants, than they could appear in the absolute and total exemption of his children from necessities. Strength perfected in weakness, grace sufficient in infirmities, hath some greater glory than strength and grace alone. Therefore he hath chosen this way as most fit for the advancing his glory, and most suitable for our comfort and edification, to give us but little in hand, and environ us with a crowd of continued necessities and wants within and without, that we may learn to cry to him as our Father, and seek our supplies from him. And withal he hath not been sparing, but liberal in promises of hearing our cries, and supplying our wants; so that this way of narrow and hard dispensation, that at first seems contrary to the love and bounty and riches of our Father, in the perfect view of it, appears to be the only way to perpetuate our communion with him, and often to renew the sense of his love and grace, that would grow slack in our hearts, if our needs did not every day stir up fresh longing, and his returns by this means are so much the more refreshing. There is a time of children's minority, when they stand in need of



continual supplies from their parents or tutors, because they are not entered into possession of their inheritance ; and while they are in this state, there is nothing more befitting them, than in all their wants to address to their father, and represent them to him. And it is fit they should be from hand to mouth, as you say, that they may know and acknowledge their dependence on their father. Truly, this is our minority, our presence in the body, which, because of sin that dwells in it, and its own natural weakness and incapacity, keeps us at much distance with the Lord, that we cannot be intimately present with him. Now, in this condition, the comely and becoming exercise of children, is, to cry to our Father, to present all our grievances ; and thus to entertain some holy correspondence with our absent Father, by the messenger of prayer and supplication, which cannot return empty, if it be not sent away too full of self-conceit. This is the most natural breathing of a child of God in this world. It is the most proper acting of his new life, and the most suitable expiration of that spirit of adoption that is inspired into him, since there is so much life as to know what we want, and our wants are infinite. Therefore that life cannot but beat this way, in holy desires after God, whose fulness can supply all wants. This is the pulse of a Christian, that goeth continually, and there is much advantage to the continuity and uninterruptedness of the motion, from the infiniteness and inexhaustedness of our needs in this life, and the continual assaults that are made by necessity and temptation on the heart. "But we have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry," &c. He puts in his own name in the latter part, though theirs was in the former part. When he speaks of a donation or privilege, he applies to the meanest, to show that the lowest and most despised creature is not in any incapacity to receive the greatest gifts of God. And then, when he mentions the working of that Spirit in way of intercession, because it imports necessity and want, he cares not to commit some incongruity in the language, by changing the person, that

he may teach us, that weakness, infirmities, and wants, are common to the best and chiefest among Christians; that the most eminent have continual need to cry, and the lowest and most obscure believers have as good ground to believe the hearing and acceptance of their cries; that the highest are not above the weakest and lowest ordinance; and that the lowest are not below the comfort of help and acceptance in him. Nay, the growth and increase of grace is so far from exempting men from, or setting them above this duty of constant supplication, that by the contrary, this is just the measure of their growth and altitude in grace. As the degrees of the height of the water *Nilus* in its overflowing are a sure sign of the fertility or barrenness of that year; so the overflowings of the spirit of prayer in one gives a present account how the heart is, whether barren and unfruitful in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, or fruitful and lively and vigorous in it. It is certain that contraries do discover one another, and the more the one be increased, that is not only the more incompatible and inconsistent with the other, but gives the most perfect discerning of it. When grace is but as twilight in the soul, and as the dawning of the day only, gross darkness and uncleanness is seen; but the more it grows to the perfect day, the more sin is seen, and the more its hated wants are discovered that did not appear; and therefore it exerciseth itself the more in opposition to sin, and supplication to God. To speak the truth, our growth here is but an advancement in the knowledge and sense of our indigency. It is but a further entry into the idolatrous temple of the heart, which makes a man see daily new abominations worse than the former; and therefore you may easily know that such repeated sights and discoveries will but press out more earnest and frequent cries from the heart, and such a growth in humility, and faith in God's fulness, will be but as oil to the flame of supplication. For what is prayer indeed, but the ardency of the affection after God, flaming up to him in cries and requests?

To speak of this exercise of an holy heart, would require more of the spirit of it than we have. But truly this is to be lamented, that though there be nothing more common among Christians in the outward practice of it, yet that there is nothing more extraordinary and rare, even among many that use, than to be acquainted with the inward nature of it. Truly, the most ordinary things in religion, are the greatest mysteries, as to the true life of them. We are strangers to the soul and life of those things, which consist in the holy behaviour and deportment of our spirits before the Father of spirits.

These words give some ground to speak of some special qualifications of prayer, and the chief principle of it. The chief principle and original of prayer is, the spirit of adoption received into the heart. It is a business of a higher nature than can be taught by precepts, or learned by custom and education. There is a general mistake among men, that the gift of prayer is attained by learning, and that it consists in the freedom and plenty of expression. But O how many doctors and disputers of the world, that can defend all the articles of faith against the opposers of them, yet how unacquainted are they with this exercise, that the poor and unlearned, and nothings in the world, who cannot dispute for religion,—yet they send up a more savoury and acceptable sacrifice, and sweet incense to God daily, when they offer up their soul's desires in simplicity and sincerity! Certainly this is a spiritual thing, derived only from the fountain of spirits. This grace of pouring out our souls unto him, and keeping communication with him,—the variety of words, and riches of expressions, it is but the shell of it, the external shadow; and all the life consists in the frame of the heart before God: and this none can put in frame, but he that formed the spirit of man within him. Some, through custom of hearing and using it, attain to a habit of expressing themselves readily in it, it may be, to the satisfaction of others, but, alas! they may be strangers to the first letters and elements of the life and spirit of prayer. I

would have you who want both, look up to heaven for it. Many of you cannot be induced to pray in your family, (and I fear little or none in secret, which is indeed a more serious work) because you have not been used, or not learned, or such like. Alas! beloved, this cometh not through education, or learning, it cometh from the spirit of adoption: and if ye cannot pray, "ye say ye have not the Spirit, and if ye have not the Spirit, ye are not the sons of God." Know what is in the inevitable sequel of your own confessions.

But I haste to the qualifications of this divine work,—fervency, reverence, and confidence, in crying Abba, Father; for these two suit well towards our Father. The first, I fear, we must seek it elsewhere than in prayer,—I find it spent on other things of less moment. Truly, all the spirit and affection of men runs in another channel, in the ways of contention and strife, in the way of passion and miscalled zeal; and because these things whereabout we do thus earnestly contend, have some interest or coherence with religion, we not only excuse but approve our vehemency. But O much better were that employed in supplications to God,—that were a divine channel! Again, the marrow of other men's spirits is exhausted in the pursuit of things in the world, the edge of their desires is turned that way, and it must needs be blunted and dulled in spiritual things, that it cannot pierce into heaven, and prevail effectually. I am sure, many of us use this excuse, who are so cold in it, that we do not warm ourselves; and how shall we think to prevail with God? Our spirits make little noise when we cry all the loudest. We can scarce hear any whisper in our hearts, and how shall he hear us? Certainly, it is not the extension of the voice pleaseth him, it is the cry of the heart that is sweet harmony in his ears. And you may easily perceive that, if you but consider that he is an infinite Spirit, that pierceth into all the corners of our hearts, and hath all the darkness of it as light before him, how can you think that such a spirit can be pleased with lip-cries?

How can he endure such deceit and falsehood, (who hath so perfect a contrariety with all false appearances) that your heart should lie so dead and flat before him, and the affection of it turned quite another way? There were no sacrifices without fire in the Old Testament, and that fire was kept in perpetually; and so no prayer now without some inward fire conceived in the desires, and blazing up and growing into a flame in the presenting of them to God.

The incense that was to be offered on the altar of perfume, *Exod. xxx*, behoved to be beaten and prepared. And truly, prayer would do well to be made out of a beaten and bruised heart, and contrite spirit, a spirit truly sensible of its own unworthiness and wants; and that beating and pounding of the heart will yield a good fragrant smell, as some spices do not till beaten. The incense was made of divers spices, intimating to us, that true prayer is not one grace alone, but a compound of graces. It is the joint exercise of all a Christian's graces, seasoned with all—every one of them gives some particular fragrancancy to it, as humility, faith, repentance, love, &c. The acting of the heart in supplication is a kind of compend and result of all these, as one perfume made up of many simples. But, above all, as the incense, our prayers must be kindled by fire on the altar; there must be some heat and fervour, some warmness conceived by the holy Spirit in our hearts, which may make our spices send forth a pleasant smell, as many spices do not till they get heat. Let us lay this engagement on our hearts, to be more serious in our addresses to God the Father of spirits; above all, to present our inward soul before him, before whom it is naked and open, though we do not bring it. And certainly frequency in prayer will much help us to fervency, and to keep it when we have it.

## XL.

Verse 15.—Whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

ALL that know anything of religion must needs know and confess that there is no exercise either more suitable to him that professeth it, or more needful for him, than to give himself to the exercise of prayer. But that which is confessed by all, and as to the outward performance gone about by many, I fear is yet a mystery sealed up from us, as the true and living nature of it. There is much of it expressed here in few words, “whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” The divine constitution and qualifications of this divine work is here made up of a temper of fervency, reverence, and confidence. The first I spoke of before; but I fear our hearts were not well heated then, or may be cooled since. It is not the loud noise of words that is best heard in heaven, or that is constructed to be crying to God. No, this is transacted in the heart more silently to men, but it striketh up into the ears of God. His ear is sharp, and the voice of the soul’s desires shrill, and though it were out of the depths, they will meet together. It is true the vehemency of affection will sometimes cause the extension of the voice; but yet it may cry as loud to heaven when it is kept within. I do not press such extraordinary degrees of fervour as may affect the body, but I would rather wish we accustomed ourselves to a solid calm seriousness and earnestness of spirit, which might be more constant than such raptures can be. that we might always gather our spirits to what we are about, and avocate them from impertinent wanderings, and fix them upon the present object of our worship. This is to worship him in spirit, who is a spirit.

The other thing that composes the sweet temper of prayer, is reverence: and what more suitable, whether

you consider him or yourselves? "If I be your Father, where is my honour; and if I be your Master, where is my fear?" Mal. i. 6. While we call him Father, or Lord, we proclaim this much, that we ought to know our distance from him, and his superiority to us. And if worship in prayer carry not this character, and express not this honourable and glorious lord, whom we serve, it wants that congruity and suitableness to him that is the beauty of it. Is there anything more uncomely than for children to behave themselves irreverently and irrespectfully towards their fathers, to whom they owe themselves? It is a monstrous thing even in nature, and to nature's light. O how much more abominable must it be, to draw near to "the Father of spirits, who made us, and not we ourselves, in whose hand our breath is, and whose are all our ways;"—in a word, to whom we owe not only this dust, but the living spirit that animates it, that was breathed from heaven, and finally, "in whom we live, and move, and have our being," and well-being,—to worship such an one, and yet to behave ourselves so unseemly and irreverently in his apprehension of his glory, by lying flat and dead before him, having scarcely him in our thoughts whom we speak to. And finally, our deportments in his sight, are such as could not be admitted in the presence of any person a little above ourselves: to be about to speak to them, and yet to turn aside continually to every one that cometh by, and entertain communication with every base creature; this, I say, in the presence of a king, or nobleman, would be accounted as absurd an incivility as could be committed; and yet we behave ourselves just so with the Father of spirits.

O the wanderings of the hearts of men in divine worship, while we are in communication with our Father and Lord in prayer, whose heart is fixed to a constant attendance and presence, by the impression of his glorious holiness? whose Spirit doth not continually gad abroad, and take a word of every thing that occurs, and so mars that soul correspondence? O that this word, Psal. lxxxix. 7,

were written with great letters on our hearts, "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him." That one word, *God*, speaketh all. Either we must convert him into an idol, which is nothing ; or, if we apprehend him to be God, we must apprehend our infinite distance from him, and his unspeakable inaccessible glory above us. He is greatly feared and revered in the assemblies that are above, in the upper courts of angels, those glorious spirits who must cover their feet from us, because we cannot see their glory. They must cover their faces from him, because they cannot behold his glory, Isa. vi. What a glorious train hath he, and yet how reverent are they ! They wait round about the throne, above and about it, as courtiers upon their king, for they are all ministering spirits, and they rest not day and night to adore and admire that holy One, crying, "Holy, holy, holy, the whole earth is full of his glory." Now, how much more then should he be greatly feared and had in reverence in the assembly of his saints, of poor mortal men, whose foundation is in the dust and in the clay ; and, besides, drink in iniquity like water ! There are two points of difference and distance from us. He is nearer angels, for angels are pure spirits ; but we have flesh, which is furthest removed from his nature. And then angels are holy and clean ; yet that is but spotted to his unspotted holiness. But we are defiled with sin, which putteth us farthest off from him, and which his holiness hath greatest antipathy at. Let us consider this, my beloved, that we may carry the impression of the glorious holiness and majesty of God on our hearts, whenever we appear before him, that so we may "serve and rejoice with trembling, and pray with reverence and godly fear." If we apprehend indeed our own quality and condition, how low, how base it is, how we cannot endure the very clear aspect of our own consciences, we cannot look on ourselves stedfastly without shame and confusion of face, at the deformed spectacle we behold ; much less would we endure to have our souls



opened and presented to the view of other men, even the basest of men,—we would be overwhelmed with shame if they could see into our hearts! Now then, apprehend seriously what he is,—How glorious in holiness! How infinite in wisdom! How the secrets of your souls are plain and open in his sight! And I am persuaded, you will be composed to a reverent, humble, and trembling behaviour in his sight.

But withal, I must add this, that because he is your Father, you may intermingle confidence. Nay, you are commanded so to do, and this honours him as much as reverence; for confidence in God, as our Father, is the best acknowledgment of the greatness and goodness of God. It declareth how able he is to save us, and how willing, and so ratifieth all the promises of God made to us, and setteth a seal to his faithfulness. There is nothing he accounts himself more honoured by, than a soul's full resigning itself to him, and relying upon his power and good-will in all necessities, casting its care upon him, as a loving Father, who careth for us. And truly, there is much beauty and harmony in the juncture of these two, "rejoicing with trembling, confidence, with reverence, to ask, nothing doubting," and yet sensible of our infinite distance from him, and the disproportion of our requests to his highness. A child-like disposition is composed thus, as also the temper and carriage of a courtier hath these ingredients in it. The love of his Father, and the favour of his Prince, maketh him take liberty, and assume boldness; and withal he is not unmindful of his own distance from his Father, or master, "Let us draw near with full assurance of faith," Heb. x. 22. There is much in the Scripture, both exhorted, commanded, and commended, of that *παρρησια*, that liberty and boldness of pouring out our requests to God, as one that certainly will hear us, and grant that which is good. Unbelief spoileth all. It is a wretched and base-spirited thing, that can conceive no honourable thoughts of God, but only like itself. But faith, which is the well-pleasing in-

gradient of prayer,—the lower thoughts a man have of himself, it maketh him conceive the higher and more honourably of God—“My ways are not as your ways, nor my thoughts as your thoughts, but as far above as the heavens above the earth,” Isa. lv. 8. This is the rule of a believing soul’s conceiving of God, and expecting from him: and when a soul is thus placed on God, by trusting and believing in him, it is fixed, “My heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord,” Psal. cxxvii. 7. O how wavering and inconstant is a soul, till it fix at this anchor, upon the ground of his immutable promises! It is tossed up and down with every wind, it is double-minded: now one way, then another: now in one mind, and shortly changed. And indeed the soul is like the sea, capable of the least or greatest commotion, James i. 6, 7, 8. I know not any thing that will either fix your hearts from wandering in prayer, or establish your hearts from trouble and disquiet after it, nothing that will so exoner and ease your spirits of care as this,—to lay hold on God as all-sufficient, and lay that constraint on your hearts, to wait on him and his pleasure, to cast your souls on his promises, that are so full and so free, and abide there, as at your anchor-hold, in all the vicissitudes and changes of outward or inward things. In spiritual things, that concern your salvation, that which is absolutely necessary, you may take the boldness to be absolute in it, and as Job, “though he should slay me, yet will I trust in him;” and as Jacob, “I will not let thee go till thou bless me.” But either in outward things, that have some usefulness in them, but are not always fitted for our chiefest good; or in the degrees of spiritual gifts, and measures of graces, the Lord calls us without anxiety to pour out our hearts in them unto him. But withal we would do it with submission to his pleasure, because he knows best what is best for us. In these, we are not bound to be confident to receive the particular we ask, but rather our confidence should pitch upon his good-will and favour, that he will certainly deny nothing that himself knows is good for us. And so in these we

should absolutely cast ourselves with carefulness upon his loving and fatherly providence, and resign ourselves to him, to be disposed of in them as he sees convenient. There is sometimes too much limitation of God and peremptoriness used with him in such things, in which his wisdom craves a latitude both in public and private matters, even as men's affections and interests are engaged; but ordinarily it is attended and followed with shame and disappointment in the end. And there is, on the other hand, intolerable remissness and slackness in many, in pressing, even the weightiest petitions of salvation, mortification, &c., which certainly ariseth from the diffidence and unbelief of the heart, and the want of that rooted persuasion, both of the incomparable necessity and worth of the things themselves, and of his willingness and engagement to bestow them.

The word is doubled here, *Abba*, Father, the Syriac and Greek word signifying one thing, expressing the tender affection and love of God towards them that come to him: "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek him diligently;" so he that cometh to God must believe that he hath the bowels and compassion of a Father, and will be more easily inclined with our importunate cries, than the fathers of our flesh. He may suffer his children to cry long, but it is not because he will not hear, but because he would hear them longer, and delights to hear their cry oftener. If he delay, it is his wisdom to appreciate and endear his mercies to us, and to teach us to press our petitions, and sue for an answer.

Besides, this is much for our comfort, that from whomsoever, and whatsoever corner in the world prayers come up to him, they cannot want acceptance. All languages, all countries, all places are sanctified by Jesus Christ, that "whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord, from the ends of the earth, shall be saved." And truly it is a sweet meditation to think, that from the ends of the earth the cries of souls are heard: and that the end is as near heaven

as the middle ; and a wilderness as near as a paradise ; that though we understand not one another, yet we have one loving and living Father that understands all our meanings. And so the different languages and dialects of the members of this body make no confusion in heaven, but meet together in his heart and affection, and are one perfume, one incense, sent up from the whole catholic church, which here is scattered on the earth. O that the Lord would persuade us to cry this way to our Father, in all our necessities !

FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD,

OR

TWENTY-EIGHT SERMONS

ON THE

FIRST AND SECOND CHAPTERS OF THE FIRST  
EPISTLE OF JOHN.



TO THE  
SINCERE SEEKER AFTER FELLOWSHIP  
WITH GOD,  
AND  
SERIOUSLY HEAVENWARD-TENDING CHRISTIAN.

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DEAR AND WELL-BELOVED FRIEND,

As thou art in thyself a rare jewel, a most precious stone, one of a thousand, yea, of ten thousand, being compared with the many thousands of common stones, I mean, external possessors in the visible church, who rest on a bare name, and of whom that is verified in every nation, which our Saviour saith, Matt. xx. 16, "Many are called, but few are chosen;" and of many of which that is also too true in every generation, (and, oh! that it were not too manifest in this also) which Paul observed in his time, Phil. iii. 18, 19, "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now I tell you, even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things;" and as to Christ thy Lord, most comely, "as a lily among thorns, being his love among the daughters," Cant. ii. 2; so also, thou in a special way art "the dearly beloved and longed for, the joy and crown," of every sincere servant of Christ in the gospel, Phil. iv. 1. Thou art, if not the only, yet the chief object of their labours, their work being either to

confirm and strengthen thee in thy way, "that thou mayest so stand fast in the Lord," or remove impediments, make crooked things straight, and so "prepare the way of the Lord before thee," or to guide thee by the light of God's word in the dark night of temptation and desertion. Now, as we are confident these sermons were preached at first by that blessed serious labourer in the work of the ministry, Mr. Hugh Binning, with a special eye to the advancement of sincere seekers after fellowship with God, and seriously heavenward-tending Christians among his hearers: so to whom shall we direct this posthumous, and, alas! unperfected work, but to thee, O serious Christian, who makest it thy work, not only to seek after the knowledge of God in Christ, in a mere speculative way, that thou mayest know, and therein rest, as if thy work were done, but also to follow after the enjoyment of that known God, and believed-on Saviour, and all the promised privileges of grace in this life, and of eternal glory in the life to come. To thee especially belong these precious soul-ravishing truths delivered in these sermons. Two things, we know, thou hast determined thy soul unto, and fixed thine eye on, as thine aim and mark in thy generation, viz. the light of knowledge, and the life of practice. As to knowledge, we are confident that, with the apostle Paul, 1 Cor. ii. 2, "Thou hast determined to know nothing but Christ, and him crucified;" and as to practice, with the said apostle thou prayest, "that thou mayest be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory of God," Phil. i. 11; "and that thou mayest be blameless and harmless, the Son of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, shining as a light in the world," Phil. ii. 15. Now, in reading these sermons thou shalt perceive, that to help thee in both these hath been the very scope and design of this serious preacher. Desirest thou to know Jesus Christ, the Lord of life, either according to his eternal subsistence in the infinite understanding of the Father, as God, or as



to his appearance in the flesh, as man, or fitness as Mediator, to reconcile thee to God his Father, both in respect of willingness and ability to save? Then here thou shalt behold him delineated to the life. Wouldest thou be clearly informed anent the only true and sure foundation of fellowship with God, the way of entertaining it, the honour or happiness of it, and sweet fruits of it, that fulness of joy that accompanies it? Here shalt thou find so clear a light as shall rejoice thy soul. Wouldest thou be fortified against the incursions and recursions of sin and Satan? Then come to this magazine, and be furnished abundantly. Desirest thou to have thy soul increased in the love of God, and to see manifest demonstrations of his love in Christ to thee? Oh! then, turn in hither, and get satisfaction to thy soul's desires. If thou desirest, with David, to hate sin with a perfect hatred; here, if any where, thou shalt obtain thy desire. Yet let none think that we limit the benefit and usefulness of these sermons to serious Christians only, and so by consequence exclude all others from any hope of soul-advantage in reading them. Nay, we declare, that though it be undeniable, that John did write this epistle with a special respect to the spiritual advantage of serious Christians, and that this holy preacher also had this same design, yet we dare be bold to invite all of what degree soever, to the serious perusing of them, assuring them that in so doing "they shall not find their labour in vain in the Lord;" for here are such pregnant demonstrations of a Deity, infinite, eternal, omnipotent, incomprehensible, governing all things by the word of his power, as may dash the boldness of the most metaphysical, notional, or profanely practical Atheist, and with conviction of spirit make him cry out, as in Psalm lxxiii. 22, "So foolish was I and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee!" Here are such clear discoveries of the vileness of sin, of its direct opposition to a holy God, and his most holy will, of its woful soul-damning effects, as may convince the most profane and stout-hearted carnalist, and awake him out of

his soul-destroying sleep of security and presumption. Here are so glorious evidences of God's free and inconceivable love to the world, in Christ Jesus, the Son of his love, as are able to enlighten with the light of consolation the sadliest dejected and casten down soul, under the apprehension of the curse and wrath of God due to it for sin, and raise it up to the hope of mercy in and through so clearly a revealed Saviour. In a word, here are to be found convictions for Atheists, piercing rebukes to the profane, clear instructions to the ignorant, milk to babes in Christ, strong meat for the strong, strength to the weak, quickening and reviving for such as faint in the way. Restoratives for such as are in a decay, reclamations and loud oyeses after backsliders to recal them, breasts of consolations for Zion's mourners, whether under the first convictions of the law, and pangs of the new birth, or under the challenges and compunctions of heart for recidivations and relapses after conversion, even while they are groaning under the power and burden of the body of death, Rom. vii. And, to add no more, here are most excellent counsels and directions to serious seekers of fellowship with God, to guide them in their way and help them forward to the attainment of that fulness of joy which is to be had in fellowship with the Father and the Son. That the Lord may bless all such to whose hands these sermons shall come, with blessings suitable to their soul's condition, especially the serious Christian's, for whose soul's furtherance and advancement these sermons were first penned, and now printed, is the most affectionate desire of, thy servant in the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour,

A. S.

## FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD.

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### I.

1 John i. 1.—That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life.

It is the great qualification of a disciple, or hearer, to be attentive and docile,—to be capable of teaching, and to apply the mind seriously to it. It is much to get the ear of a man; if his ear be gotten, his mind is the more easily gained. Therefore those who professed eloquence, and studied to persuade men to any thing, used in the entry to fall upon something that might stir up the attention of their hearers, or make them the more inclinable to receive instruction, or catch their favour or good-will, which is of great moment to persuasion: for it is sometimes fit to open the passages of the heart by such means, that there may be the more easy entry for instruction and persuasion. Truly there is something of this art runs here in a divine channel; as indeed all these rules of human wisdom attain their perfection, when they meet with a divine Spirit, that elevates them to a more transcendent use. Happy was that eloquence of Paul's, and something like the sweet inspirations of angels, by which they prevail with the spirits of men: "Nevertheless, being crafty," saith he, "I caught you with guile," 2 Cor. xii. 16. These were *piæ fraudes*, whereby he used to catch poor souls out of the pit, and pluck them out of the fire; and

he that said, "I will make you fishers of men," taught them to use some holy deceit, to present some things for the allurement of souls, and so to surround and inclose them with most weighty and convincing reasons. This beloved apostle, who leaned upon Christ's bosom, and was likely to learn the very secrets of the art of fishing souls,—you see how he goeth about the business. He useth an holy art in this preface. Being about to give a recapitulation of the whole gospel, and to make a short summary of the doctrine of it, for the more effectual establishment and confirmation of souls already converted, and for the powerful persuasion of others to embrace it, he useth all the skill that can be in the entry, to dispose men's hearts to receive it. Like a wise orator, he labours to make them *attentos, dociles, et benevolos*; to stir up their attention, to conciliate their affection, and so to make them docile, and easily teachable. He stirs up attention, when he shews that he is not to speak about trifling light matters, or low things, or things that do not concern them; but concerning the greatest, most concerning, and important things to them, even the word of life, in which all their life was rapt up: which, though it was ancient in itself, yet withal it was a new thing to the world, and so for all respects deserved to be taken serious notice of. Then he conciliates their benevolence and good-will, by showing his own good affection towards them, and his great design in it, that it was only for their good and salvation, that he had nothing else before him, but to have them partakers with himself, in that same happiness. He had found a jewel, and he hides it not, but proclaims it, that all men may have fellowship with him, and that is with God, and that cannot but bring in full joy to the heart. Now a soul being made thus attentive and willing to hear, it is the best disposition, that makes them most capable of being taught. If those two stays were come over—the careless regard that is in men's hearts towards the gospel, and the suspicious thoughts and prejudices against the ambassadors of it, then what

would hinder to believe it? The great miseries of men are, inconsideration and misapprehension: either men are so noised with other things continually buzzing in their ears, and their hearts so possessed with the clamours of their lusts, and the cries of the things of this world, that they have no leisure so much as to hearken patiently to this blessed sound, or to apprehend seriously what weight and moment lies in it; and so the most part of men cannot give that earnest and deep attention that is necessarily required for this divine teaching; or else there are many mistakes and misconceptions of the gospel, which sometimes arise to that height of reasoning against God, and prejudices against them that carry his message, which usually are joined together, and these stop the ears of men against the wisest and most powerful enchantment of preaching, that it gains not much ground on them. O that we would once listen to the gospel! "Hearken and incline your ears unto me," is the Lord's first great request: and if once you do but seriously apply your minds and hearts, to see what is held out unto you, and to prove what good is in it, certainly these sure and everlasting mercies will mercifully and sweetly catch you with guile, and deceive you (if I may say so) to your eternal advantage. Wisdom, the Father's wisdom, begs but an equal hearing of you. Let her have but a patient hearing, and a silent impartial judgment of the heart, and she will carry it off from all that suit you. It is lamentable that the voice of God should be outcried by men's continual uninterrupted flood of business, that fills the heart with a continual noise, and keeps men in such a constant hurry and distemper, that they can give time and patience to nothing else. And this is only the advantage the world and the lusts of it have; for if they come once under a sober and serious examination, and the other party, that is, Jesus Christ and the word of life, might have the liberty to be heard in the inward retired thoughts of the heart, it would soon be found how unequal they are, and that all their efficacy consists

in our ignorance, and their strength in our weakness. Certainly Christ would carry it, to the conviction of all that is in the soul. I beseech you let us give him this attention.

He that answers a tale before he hear it, it is a folly and weakness to him. A folly certainly it is to give this gospel a repulse before ye hear it. It promiseth life and immortality, which nothing else doth; and you entertain other things upon lower promises and expectations, even after frequent experiences of their deceitfulness. What a madness then is it to hear this promise of life in Christ so often beaten upon you, and yet never so much as to put him to the proof of it! And to put him off continually who knocks at your hearts, before you will consider attentively who it is that thus importunes you. O, my beloved, that you would hear him to amen! Let him speak freely to your hearts, and commune with them in the night on your beds, in your greatest retirement from other things, that you may not be disturbed by the noise of your lusts and business; and I persuade myself, you who have now least mind of this life and joy in God, should find it, and find it in him. But to cut off all convictions and persuasions at first, and to set such a guard at your minds, to provide that nothing of that kind come in, or else that it be cast out as an enemy, this is unequal, ignorant, and unreasonable dealing, which you alone will repent of, it may be, too late, when past remedy.

He propounds that which he is to speak in the fittest way, for the commendation of it to their hearts; and O! how vast a difference betwixt this, and the ordinary subject of men's discourses! Our ears are filled continually with reports: and it is the usual way of men to delight to hear, and to report even those things that are not so delightful in themselves. And truly there are not many occurrences in the world (suppose you had a diurnal of affairs of all men every week) that can give any solid refreshment to the heart, except in the holy meditation of the vanity, vexation, and inconstancy that God hath sub-

jected all those things unto. But it is sad that Christians, who have so noble and divine, so pleasant and profitable things to speak upon one to another, are, notwithstanding, as much subject to that Athenian disease, to be itching after new things continually, and to spend our time this way, to report, and to hear news. And, alas! what are those things that are tossed up and down continually, but the follies, weaknesses, impotencies and wickedness, ambition and avarice of men, the iniquity and impiety of the world that lies in wickedness? And is there any thing in this either pleasant or profitable, that we should delight to entertain our own thoughts and others ears with them? But the subject that is here treated of is of another nature; nothing in itself so excellent, nothing to us so convenient: "That which was from the beginning, of the word of life, we declare unto you." O how pleasant and sweet a voice is that which sounds from heaven, be [*i. e.* in comparison with] those confused noises are, that arise from the earth! This is a message that is come from heaven, with him that came down from it; and indeed that is the airth, [*i. e.* quarter] from whence good news hath come. Since the first curse was pronounced upon the earth, the earth hath brought forth nothing but thorns and briars of contention, strife, sorrow, and vexation. Only from above hath this message been sent to renew the world again, and re-create it, as it were. There are four properties, by which this infinitely surpasses all other things, can be told you:—For itself it is most excellent; for its endurance it is most ancient; and to us it is most profitable; and both in itself, and to us, it is most certain; and by these the apostle labours to prepare their hearts to serious attention.

For the excellency of the subject that he is to declare, it is incomparable, for it is no less than that jewel that is hid in the mine of the Scriptures, which he, as it were; digs up, and shews and offers it unto them; that jewel, I say, which when a man hath found, he may sell all to buy

it; that jewel, more precious than the most precious desires and delights of men, even Jesus Christ, the substantial word of life, who is the substance of all the shadows of the old Testament, the end of that ministry, the accomplishment of the promises, and the very life of all religion, without which there is nothing more vain and empty. It is true, the gospel is the word of life, and holds out salvation to poor sinners; but yet it is Christ that is the life of that word, not only as touching the efficacy and power of it, but as touching the subject of it; for the gospel is a word of life only, because it speaks of him who is the life and the light of men. It is but a report of the true life, as John said, "I am not that light, but am sent to bear witness of that light," John i. 8. So the gospel, though it be called "the power of God to salvation," Rom i. 16, and "the Saviour of life, and the gospel of salvation," Eph. i. 13, yet it is not that true life, but only a testimony and declaration of it. It hath not life and immortality in itself, but only the bringing of those to light, and to the knowledge of men, 2 Tim. i. 10. It is a discovery where these treasures are lying, for the searching and finding.

To speak of this word of life, Jesus Christ, according to his eternal subsistence in the infinite understanding of the Father, it would certainly require a divine spirit, more elevated above the ordinary sphere of men, and separated from that earthliness and impurity that makes us incapable of seeing that holy and pure Majesty. Angels were but low messengers for this; for how can they express to us what they cannot conceive themselves, and therefore wonder at the mystery of it? I confess, the best way of speaking these things, which so infinitely surpass created capacities, were to sit down in silence, and wonder at them; and withal to taste such a sweetness, in the immense greatness and infinite mysteriousness of what we believe, as might ravish the soul more, after that which is unknown, than all the perfections of the world, known and seen to the bottom, can do. This doctrine of the holy



Trinity hath been propagated from the beginning of the world, even among the heathens, and derived by tradition from the first fathers, or the Hebrews, to neighbouring nations; and therefore they speak many divine things of that infinite, supreme Being, who is the fountain of the whole creation, and that he created all things by his most divine word, and that his blessed Spirit is the union and bond of both, and of all things besides. It is known what mysteries the Pythagoreans apprehended in the number three, what perfection they imagined to be in it. So much was let out, as might either make them without excuse, or prepare the world to receive readily the light, when it should be clearly revealed. It is commonly held forth, that this eternal word is the birth of the infinite understanding of God, reflecting upon his own most absolute and perfect Being; which is illustrated by some poor comparison to us creatures, who form in our minds, in the understanding of any thing, an inward word, or image of the object, some representation and similitude of that we understand. And this is more perfect than any external vocal expression can be; so we have a weak and finite conception of the acting of that infinite wisdom of God, by which he knows himself, that there results, as it were, upon it, the perfect substantial image, and the express character of the divine essence. And therefore is the Son of God called "the Word, which was with God," and "the wisdom of the Father," because he is, as it were, the very birth of his understanding, and not only the image of his own essence, but the idea in which he conceived, and by which he created the visible world. Then we use to conceive the Holy Ghost as the production of his blessed will, whereby he loves, delights, and hath complacency in his own all-sufficient, all-blessed Being, which he himself alone perfectly comprehends, by his infinite understanding, and therefore called the Spirit, a word borrowed from resemblance to poor creatures, who have many impulses and inclinations to several things, and are carried to motion and action, rather from that part which is invisible

in them—the subtlest parts, therefore called spirits. So the Lord applies his almighty power, and exerciseth his infinite wisdom, according to the pleasure and determination of his will, for that seems to be the immediate principle of working. Therefore there is mention made of the Spirit in the creation of the world, “He sent out his Spirit, and they were created,” Psal. civ. 30. These are the weak and low attempts of men to reach the height of that unsearchable mystery. Such conjecture we have of this word of God, and his eternal generation, as if trees could take upon them to understand the nature of beasts, or as if beasts would presume to give an account of the spirit that acts in men. Certainly the distance is infinitely greater between God and us; and he must needs behold greater vanity, folly, and darkness, in our clearest apprehensions of his majesty, than we could find in the reasonings and conceptions of beasts about our nature. When our own conception in the womb is such a mystery as made David to say, “O how wonderfully am I made, and fearfully!” He saw a curious art and wisdom in it that he could not understand, and he believed an infinite power he could not conceive, which surprised his soul with such unexpected matter of wonder, as made him fear and tremble at the thought of it. I say, when the generation of a poor creature hath so much depth of wisdom in it, how canst thou think to understand that everlasting wonder of angels, the birth and conception of that eternal wisdom of God? And if thou canst not understand from whence the wind comes, and whither it goes, or how thine own spirits beat in thy veins, what is the production of them, and what their motions; how can we then conceive the procession of the Holy Ghost, “which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to consider it?”

## II.

1 John i. 1.—That which was from the beginning, &c.

THINGS are commended sometimes, because they are ancient, especially doctrines in religion, because truth is before error, and falsehood is but an aberration from truth: and therefore there is so much plea and contention among men about antiquity, as if it were the sufficient rule of verity. But the abuse is, that men go not far enough backward in the steps of antiquity, that is, to the most ancient rule, and profession, and practice of truth in Scripture, to Christ and his apostles, but halt in their grandfathers' tombs. But sometimes things are commended, because new; the nature of man being inclined to change and variety, and ready to surfeit and loathe accustomed things. Even as the stomach finds appetite for new and unusual diets, so the mind of man hath a secret longing after new doctrines and things. Now, we have both these combined together in this subject, which makes it the more excellent and wonderful,—antiquity, and novelty. For antiquity, it is that which was from the beginning, and which was with the Father, and that is before all antiquity, even from eternity; not only from the beginning of time, but before all time, before all imaginable beginnings. He of whom he speaks, Christ Jesus, the Father's Word, "was with the Father from the beginning, with the Ancient of days," who infinitely and immeasurably antedates all antiquity, to whose endurance all antiquity that is renowned among men is but novelty; to whom the world is but as of six days standing, or but as of yesterday, if we consider that infinite, beginningless, immensurable endurance of God, before this world. What a boddom or clew is that, that can never be untwined by the imaginations of men and angels! To all eternity they should never unwind it, and come to

the end of that thread of the age of the Father, and the Son, who possessed one another before the hills were, and before the foundations of the mountains. This is it that maketh religion the richest and most transcendant subject in the world, that it presents us with a twofold eternity, and environs the soul before and behind with an eternity without end, communicated to angels and men, from God. That which was from the beginning, either real or imagined, how much moment and weight is in that, to persuade a soul and compose it, beyond all the specious and painted appearances of the world! To consider that such a Saviour is holden out unto us, to come unto and lean upon, that is, the Rock of ages, upon whose word this huge frame is bottomed, and stands firm; one who infinitely exceeds and prevents all things visible or invisible, all their mutations and changes; one who was possessed of the Father, as his delights, before the foundation of the world, and so most likely to reconcile him to us, and prevail with him. Yea, most certainly, they must have one will, and one delight, who were undivided from all eternity; and they then rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, taking complacency in their own thoughts of peace and good will they had towards us, afterwards to break forth. And if both delighted in their very projects and plots upon the business, what may we think the accomplishment of the whole design will add, if it were possible to superadd to their delight? I would have you upon this, to gather two considerations for your edification: one, to think what an incomparably excellent Saviour we have, one with God, equal to him, yea, one with him from all eternity; and so how strong a foundation there is for faith and confidence! What a Rock to establish a tossed soul upon! Man's misery and curse being for all eternity, there is One to deliver from that, who was from all eternity. And who could purchase unto us such absolute blessedness throughout all eternity, who was not himself from all eternity? What marvellous congruity and beauty is in the ways of God! How is all fitted and

framed by infinite wisdom, to the end that we may have strong consolation ! Do you not see the infinite evil and heinousness of sin in the giving of such a precious ransom for it ! O how is the black visage of sin pourtrayed in the beauty and glory of the Mediator's person ? How is it painted, even to horror in his death ! Again, what divinity and worth is put upon the immortal soul of man, that is but of yesterday, since the beginning ; when he that was the delight of God, before all beginning, is weighed in the balance, as it were, with it, and no other thing found sufficient for exchange and compensation, that the soul may be redeemed ! And doth not this answer all the jealousies and suspicious thoughts, and fearful apprehensions, arising from the consideration of our own weakness and infirmity ; when such an One is offered, as is able to save to the utmost ? Then I would desire you may believe, that the Father is as well-minded to the salvation of sinners as the Son ; for they were sweet company together from all eternity, and, as it were, contrived this plot and design between them, to save and redeem mankind. Some entertain harsher thoughts of the Father, as if Christ were more accessible and exorable ; but the truth is, he hath given his Son this command, and therefore he professed, that it was not so much his will, as his Father's, he was about. Therefore, correct your apprehensions ; do not stand back from the Father, as it were, till you have prevailed with Christ. No, that is not the way. Come, in your first address, to the Father, in the Son, for so he wills you ; not because he must be overcome by his Son's persuasion. but because he would have his love to run in that channel, through Christ, to us. And indeed our Saviour was much in holding out the love of the Father, and laboured to persuade the world of it. Withal, I wish you to consider whom ye neglect and despise, who hear this gospel daily, and the word of life holden out unto you ; and yet suffer not your hearts to be moved, or stirred after him. Alas, my beloved, to forsake so great a mercy, as the eternal word of life, as the infinite wis-

dom of the Father, and to let the offer of this every day run by us, and never to find leisure and vacancy from the multitude of businesses, and throng of the thoughts and lusts of the world, never to start so far backward, as to look beyond this world, to God, and his Son Jesus Christ, never to mind seriously, either him that was before all things visible, or our own souls, that must survive and out-live all this visible frame. This, I say, is the great misery and condemnation of the world, that this eternal light hath shined, and you love your own darkness better. But be persuaded, that one day ye will think one offer of this word of life better than life, better, infinitely better, than the most absolute life that the attendance and concurrence of all the creatures could yield you. O then, that ye would incline your ears and hearts to this that is declared unto you ! to receive this word of life, that was from the beginning, and ye may be persuaded, ye shall enjoy a blessedness without end.

But there is withal a newness in this subject, which both increases admiration, and may the more engage our affection ; for “ the life was manifested,” (saith he) ver. 2 ; and he is a word of life, as though he was invisible and untouchable from the beginning, yet he was lately clothed with flesh, that made him both visible, and capable of being handled. Now, truly these are the two poles, about which the mystery, glory, and wonder of Christianity turns,—the antiquity of his real existence, as God ; and the lateness or novelty of his appearance in the flesh, as man. Nothing so old, for he hath the infinite forestart of the oldest and most ancient creatures. Take those angels, the sons of God, who sung together in the first morning of the creation, yet their generation can soon be told, and their years numbered. It is easy to calculate all antiquity, and we should not reach six thousand years, when it is taken at the largest measure ; and what are six thousand years in his sight, but as six days when they are past ? And if we would run backward, as far before that point of beginning, and calculate other six

thousand, yet we are never a jot nearer the age of the Son of God. Suppose a mountain of sand, as big as the earth, and an angel to take from it one grain in every year, your imagination would weary itself ere ye reckoned in what space this mountain should be diminished, or removed: it would certainly trouble the arithmetic of the wisest mathematician. Now imagine as many years, or ages of years, to have run out before the world took its beginning, as the years in which the angel would exhaust this mountain; yet we have not come a whit nearer the endurance of our Lord and Saviour, whose being is like a circle, without beginning or end. "Behold, he is great, and we know him not, and the number of his years cannot be searched out," Job xxxvi. 26; "and who can tell his generation?" The age of this Word is such a labyrinth, with innumerable turnings and windings in it, which will always lead them round that enter in it; and so they are, after the longest progress and search, but just where they were, always beginning, and never coming nearer the beginning of his duration, because it is the beginning of all things that hath a beginning, but hath none itself.

Now he that was thus blessed from everlasting, "who dwelt in inaccessible light and glory, which no man hath seen, nor can see," infinitely removed from all human capacities and senses: he, I say, begins to be manifested in the fulness of time; and to make himself visible, he takes on our flesh; and all for this purpose,—that he who was the substantial life in himself, and the eternal life, in an essential and necessary way, might become life to poor dead sinners, and communicate to them eternal life. And truly it was no wonder that all ages were in the expectation of this from the beginning of the world, since was first promised, that the inhabitants of heaven were in a longing expectation to see and look into this mystery for there is something in it more wonderful than the creation of this huge frame of heaven and earth. God made himself in a manner visible, by making the visible world.

His power, goodness, and wisdom, are everywhere imprinted in great characters on the whole, and all the parts of it. The light, how glorious a garment is it, with which he is, as it were, clothed! The heavens, how majestic a throne! The earth, how stately a footstool! The thunder, how glorious and terrible a voice! In a word, the being, the beauty, the harmony, and proportion of this huge frame, is but a visible appearance of the invisible God. But in taking on our flesh, the Word is more wonderfully manifested, and made visible. For, in the first, the Creator made creatures to start out of nothing, at his first command; but in this, the Creator is made a creature. He once gave a beginning of being to things that were not. Being before all beginning himself, he now takes a beginning, and becomes flesh, that he was not. And what is it in which he was manifested? Is it the spiritual nature of angels? But though that far excels ours, yet it is no manifestation of him to us; for he should still be as unknown as ever. Is it in the glory, perfection, and power of the visible world, as in the sun, and lights of heaven? But though they have more shew of glory than the flesh of man, yet it makes not much to our comfort; there would not be so much consolation in that manifestation. Therefore, O how wisely and wonderfully is it contrived, for the good of lost man! That the Son of God shall be made of a woman, that the Father of spirits shall be manifested in the lowest habit of our flesh. And the lower and baser that be, in which he appears, the higher the mystery is, and the richer the comfort is. Suppose the manifestation of glory should not be so great, yet the manifestation of love is so much the greater; and this is the great design, "God so loved the world," &c. John iii. Now, I may say, even the glory of "the only-begotten Son of God" was the more visibly manifested, that he appeared in so low and unequal a shape; for power to show itself in weakness, for glory to appear in baseness, for divinity to kythe [*i. e.* reveal, or make itself known] in humanity, and such glorious rays



to break forth from under such a dark cloud ; this was greater glory and more majesty, than if he had only shewed himself in the perfection of the creatures. Now it is easy to distinguish the veil from that it covers ; so separate infirmity from divinity. But then it had been more difficult, if his outward appearance had been so glorious, to give unto God what was God's, and to give the creature what was the creature's. The more near his outward shape had been to his divine nature, the less able had we been to see the glory of his divinity through it.

Now, my beloved, when both these are laid together, the ancientness of our Saviour, and withal the newness of his appearance in flesh, by which he hath come so near us and, as it were, brought his own majesty within our sphere, to be apprehended by us ; and for no other end, but to make life and immortality to shine forth, as beams from him, to the quickening of dead souls. O how should this conjunction endear him to us ! That the everlasting Father should become a child for us ; that is one wonder. The next wonder is, that "we, who are enemies, should be made the children of God by him." When the dark and obscure prophesying of this, when the twilight of Jewish types and shadows did create so much joy in the hearts of believers, in so much that they longed for, and rejoiced to see afar off that day. When such a dark representation of this word of life was the very life of the godly in the world for four thousand years, O how much is the cause of joy increased, by the Sun of Righteousness himself appearing in the very darkest night of superstition and idolatry that ever was over the world ! when the true Life hath arisen himself, and brought to open light the life that was obscurely couched up in prophecies and ceremonies, as hid under so many clouds. O then, let us open our hearts to him, and then entertain these new and fresh tidings with new delights ! Though these be now more than sixteen hundred years old, yet they are still recent to a believing heart. There

is an everlasting spring in them, that sends out every day fresh consolation to souls, as refreshing as the first day this spring was opened. This is the new wine that never grows old, nay, it is rather every generation renewed, with the accession of some new manifestation of the love of God. Christ's incarnation was the first manifestation of the Son, the very morning of light and life, the day-spring visiting the world, that was buried in an hellish darkness of heathen idolatry; and even the church of God, in the grave of superstition, and corruption of doctrine and manners. Then did that Sun of Righteousness first set up his head above the horizon. But it is but one day still. He hath been but coming by degrees to the meridian, and "shining more and more to the perfect day." That Sun hath not set since, but made a course, and gone round about the world, in the preaching of the gospel, and brought life and light about, by succession from one nation to another, and one generation to another; and therefore we ought to entertain it this day with acclamations and jubilation of heart, as the people that lie under the north do welcome the sun when it comes once a year to them. "After that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared," Tit. iii 4,—*φιλανθρωπία*, his kindly and affectionate love to mankind, that is it that shines so brightly. The beams of grace and love to men are the rays that are scattered from this Sun of Righteousness. O the hardness of men's hearts, the impenetrable obstinacy of man, that this cannot melt or pierce! How damnable and miserable a case are they in, who can neither be persuaded, with the eternity of this subject, to adore it, nor moved with the late appearance of the love of God to the world, in sending of his Son; whom neither Christ's majesty nor his humility can draw! Certainly this makes sinners under the gospel in a more deplorable condition than Sodom; because "if he had not come, they had not had such sin, but now it is without excuse," &c.

## III.

1 John i. 1, 2, 3.—That which we have heard and seen of the word of life, declare we unto you, &c.

THINGS that are excellent in themselves will be loved for themselves; but they become the more suitable object of affection, if they have withal some suitableness and conveniency to us. Yet neither the excellency nor conveniency of the object is sufficient to engage the heart, if there be not something in the mind too, suitable to the object; that is, the apprehension of that reality and good that is in it. For, as there is a certainty in the object, that makes it a real, not imaginary thing; so there must be a certainty in the subject, whereby the thing is apprehended to be true, good, and excellent; and then the object of affection is completed. Some things there are in nature, excellent in nature, excellent in themselves, but they rather beget admiration than affection, because they are not suitable to our necessities. Other things of a more ordinary purchase have some conveniency to supply our wants; and though they be less worth in their own nature than precious stones, and such like, yet they are more desired. But there is this lamentable disproportion betwixt our apprehensions, and the things themselves, which is the ground of much disappointment; and so of vexation. The things of this world having nothing of that solid excellency, or true worth and conveniency to our souls, nothing suitable to our immortal spirits; but being empty vain shadows, and windy husks, instead of substantial true food; yet there are high apprehensions, and big conceits of them, which is a kind of monstrous production, or empty swelling of the mind; which, because it hath no bottom of solidity, it will fall and vanish. Again, take a view of spiritual things holden out in the gospel, and there is as incongruous and unproportion-

ed carriage of our hearts towards them. They have a certainty and reality and subsistence in themselves. They alone are excellent, and suitable to our spirits, notwithstanding the mind of man is most hugely misshapen towards them by unbelief, and hath nothing in his apprehension suitable to the things themselves. They are represented as far below their true worth, as things temporal above their just value; and therefore men are not enamoured with them, souls are not ravished after that beauty that is in them.

Now the end of these words read is, to reform this irregular, disorderly posture of our minds, to hold out to you things truly excellent, and exceedingly convenient. Things good and profitable, in the most superlative degree, in the highest rank that your imaginations can suppose; and then to persuade you, that you are not deceived with vain words, or fair promises, but that there is a certain truth, and an infallible reality in them, that you being ascertained in your souls, according to the certainty of the thing presented, may then freely, without any reserve, give your hearts to love, embrace, and follow them. O that there might be such a meeting between your hearts and this eternal life! that as he hath come near to us, to be suitable to us, your apprehensions might draw near to be suitable to him; and by this means, your souls might meet immediately with that word of life, and have that constant fellowship with him, that is spoken of, verse 3. So your joy should be full; for joy is but the full peace of the desires. Fill up all the wants of the heart, and then it is full of joy. And so, when such a satisfying object is pitched on, as doth exactly correspond, and answer the inward apprehensions of the mind, then there is no more room in the heart for any other thing: as, if two superficies were exactly plain and smooth, they could join so closely together, that no air could come between them, and then they could hardly be pulled asunder.

We spoke something of the excellency of that Word of life in himself, and it is but little that is said, when all is

said, in respect of that which he truly is ; but I fear we speak, and ye hear, more of these things than either of us lively and affectionately apprehend, or lay up in our hearts. I fear, that as we say less than is, so more than we think, I mean, seriously think upon. But we shall proceed. Such an everlasting glorious person, though he have life in himself ; though he be never so excellent as the Son of God, yet what is that to us ? It seems he is never a whit nearer us, or not more suitable to restore us, than the very Majesty that we offended. How far is he without our sight, and without our comprehension ! He is high as heaven, who shall ascend to bring down that eternal Life to us ? But stay and consider, that he is not only so glorious in himself, but so gracious to us ; he is not only invisible as God, but manifested to our senses as man ; not only hath life in himself, but is an everlasting spring of life to us ; not only hath his throne in heaven with his Father, but hath come down to the world, to bring that eternal life near us, even in our mouth and hearts ; to preach it, to purchase it, to seal it, and to bestow it,—“and the life was manifested !” the life, and that eternal life, words of force, that have some emphasis in them. The life is much, that eternal Life is more ; and yet these had been little to us, if not manifested to us. Life might have remained hid in God ; eternal life might have resided in Christ, the fountain for all eternity, and nothing diminished of their happiness, if these had never sprung out and vented themselves. If that life that was with the Father from the beginning, had never come down from the Father, we would have missed it, not they. We alone had been miserable by it. Well, then, there is a manifestation of life in Christ’s low descent to death. There is a manifestation of the riches of love and grace in the poverty and emptiness of our Saviour, and thus he is suited to us and our necessities, every way fitly correspondent. And now it is not only, “as the Father hath life in himself, so the Son hath life in himself ;” but there is a derivation of that life to man. That donation

of life to the Son, John v. 26, was not so much for any need he had of it, as by him to bestow it on us, that it might be, "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me," John vi. 57. As parents that retain affection to their children, albeit they have committed great injuries, for which they are driven out of their houses, yet they will, as it were, underhand bestow upon them, and exercise that same love in a covered way, by a third person, by giving to them, to impart to their children. Notwithstanding, this halts too much, for our Father dissembles not his love, but proclaims it in sending his Son. Nor doth Christ hide it, but declares, that he is instructed with sufficient furniture for eternal life; that himself is the bread of life sent from heaven, that whosoever receiveth it with delight, and ponders, and meditates on it in the heart, and so digests it in their souls, they shall find a quickening, quieting, comforting, and strengthening virtue in him. Nay, there is a strait connection between his life and ours: "Because I live, ye shall live also;" as if he could no more want us, than his Father can want him, John xiv. 19; and as if he could be no more happy without us, than his Father without him. And whence is it come to pass, but from his manifestation for this very end and purpose? How should such strange logic hold? Whence such a *because*, if this had not been all his errand into the world, for which his Father dispensed to want him, as it were, and he did likewise condescend to leave his Father for a season? And now this being the business he came about, it is strange he appeared in so unsuitable and unlikely a form, in weakness, poverty, misery, ignominy, and all the infirmities of our flesh; which seemed rather contrary to his design, and to indispose him for giving life to others, whose life was a continued death in the eyes of men; and the last act of the scene seems to blow up the whole design of quickening dead sinners: when he who was designed Captain of salvation is killed himself; for if he save not himself, how

should he save others? And yet behold the infinite wisdom, power, and grace of God, working under ground, giving life to the dead, by the death of life itself; saving those that are lost, by one that lost himself; overcoming the world by weakness; conquering Satan by suffering; triumphing over death by dying. Like that renowned king of the Athenians, who (when he heard of an oracle, that if the general were saved alive, the army could not be victorious) changed his habit, and went among the camp of his enemies, and fought valiantly till he was killed; whom, when the armies of the enemy understood to be the king and general, they presently lost their hearts, and retired and fled: so our Saviour, and captain of our salvation, hath offered himself once for all; and by being killed, hath purchased life to all that believe in his death, and that eternal life. Therefore, he is not only the word of life in himself, and that eternal life in an essential manner, but he alone hath the words of eternal life, and is the alone fountain of life to us.

Now for the certainty of this manifestation of the Word of life in our flesh, both that he was man, and that he was more than a man, even God: this, I say, we have the greatest evidence of that the world can afford, next to our own seeing and handling. To begin with the testimony set down here, of those who were ear and eye-witnesses of all; which, if they be men of credit, cannot but make a great impression of faith upon others. Consider who the apostles were,—men of great simplicity, whose education was so mean, and expectations in the world so low, that they could not be supposed to conspire together to a falsehood; and especially when there was no worldly inducement leading them thereto, but rather all things persuading to the contrary. Their very adversaries could never object any thing against them but want of learning, and simplicity, which are furthest from the suspicion of deceitfulness. Now how were it possible, think you, that so many thousands every where should have received this new doctrine, so unsuitable to human

reason, from their mouths, if they had not persuaded them that themselves were eye-witnesses of all those miracles that he did to confirm his doctrine, and that this testimony had been above all imaginable exception? Yea, so evident was it in matter of fact, that both enemies themselves confessed, the Jews and Gentiles that persecuted that way were constrained, through the evidence of the truth, to acknowledge that such mighty works shewed forth themselves in him, though they out of malice imputed it to ridiculous and blasphemous causes. And besides, the apostle used to provoke to the very testimony of five hundred, who had seen Jesus rise from death, which is not the custom of liars; neither is it possible for so many, as it were, of purpose, to conspire to such an untruth, as had so many miseries and calamities following on the profession of it, 1 Cor. xv. 6.

But what say they? "That which we have heard of," not only from the prophets, who have witnessed of him from the beginning, and do all conspire together to give a testimony that he is the Saviour of the world; but from John, who was his messenger, immediately sent before his face, and whom all men, even Christ's enemies, acknowledged to be a prophet; and therefore, his visible pointing out the Lamb of God, his declaring how near he was, and preferring of him infinitely before himself, who had so much authority himself, (and so likely to have spoken the truth, being misled by no ambition or affectation of honour,) his instituting a new ordinance, plainly pointing out the Messiah at the doors, and publishing constantly that voice, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand!" These we, and all the people have heard, and heard, not with indignation, but with reverence and respect. But above all, we heard himself, the truth, prophet, and sweet preacher of Israel; since the first day he began to open his mouth in the ministry of the gospel, we have with attentive ears, and earnest hearts, received all from his mouth, and laid up these golden sayings in our hearts. He did not constrain them to abide with



him, but there was a secret power that went from him, that chained them to him inevitably, "Lord, whither shall we go from thee, for thou hast the words of eternal life?" O that was an attractive virtue, a powerful conserving virtue, that went out of his mouth! We heard him, say they, and we never heard any speak like him, not so much for the pomp and majesty of his style,—for he came low, sitting on an ass, and was as condescending in his manner of speech as in his other behaviour,—but because "he taught with authority." There was a divine virtue in his preaching; some sparkles of a divine spirit and power in his discourses, broke out from under the plainness and simplicity of it; and made our souls truly to apprehend of him, what was sacrilegiously attributed in flattery to a man, "the voice of God, and not of man." We heard him so many years speak familiarly to us, and with us, by which we were certainly persuaded he was a true man. And then we heard him in his speeches open the hidden mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, revealing the will of the Father, which no man could know, but he that was with the Father, and came down from him. We heard him unfolding all these shadows and coverings of the old Testament, expounding Moses and the prophets, taking off the vail, and uncovering the ark and oracles. And "how did our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us, and opened to us the scriptures?" We heard him daily in the synagogues expound the scriptures, whereof himself was the living commentary, when he read them; we saw the true exposition before our eyes.

Now, my beloved, you may be admitted to hear him too, for the sum of the living words that came from the Word of life are written. His sermons are abridged in the evangelists, that you may read them, and when you read them, think within yourselves that you hear his holy mouth speak them. Set yourselves, as amongst his disciples, "that so ye may believe, and believing, may have eternal life;" for this end are they written, John xx. 30, 31.

## IV.

I John i. 1, 2.—Which we have heard and seen, &c.

THERE is a gradation of certainty here : hearing himself speak is more than hearing by report ; but an eye-witness is better than ten ear-witnesses, and handling adds a third assurance : for the sense of touching gives the last and greatest evidence of truth. It is true, that the sense is properly correspondent to sensible things, and of itself can only give testimony to his humanity ; yet I conceive these are here alleged for both, even also to witness his glorious and divine nature ; which, though it did not fall under sight and handling, yet it discovered itself to be latent, under that visible covering of flesh, by sensible effects, no less than the spirit of man, which is invisible, manifests its presence in the body, by such sensible operations, as can proceed from no other principle. And, therefore, this faithful witness adds, “which we have looked upon ;” which relates not only to the outward attention of the eyes, but points at the inward intention and affection of the heart. Our senses did bring in such strange and marvellous objects to our minds, that we stood gazing, and beheld it over and over again, looked upon it with reason, concluding what it might be. We gave entertainment to our minds, to consider it wisely and deliberately, and fastened our eyes, that we might detain our hearts in the consideration of such a glorious person. From this, then, ye have two things clear ; one is, that our Lord Jesus Christ was a true man, and that his disciples had all possible evidence of it, which the history more abundantly shews. He conversed with them familiarly, he eat and drank with them, yea, his conversation in the world was very much condescending, in outward behaviour, to the customs of the world. He eat with Pharisees ; when they invited him, he refused

not ; but he was more bold with publicans and sinners, to converse with them, as being their greatest friend. He was uncivil to none ; would deter none through a rigid austere conversation. And, indeed, to testify the truth of his human nature, he came so low to partake of all human infirmities without sin, and to be subject to extraordinary afflictions and crosses, as to the eyes of the world it did quite extinguish his divine glory, and bury it in misbelief. This which we speak of, as a testimony and evidence that he was man, was the very grand stumbling-block and offence of the Jews and Gentiles ; which they made use of as an evidence and certain testimony that he was not God. The evidence of the one seems to give an evidence to the other. But let us consider this, for it is a sweet and pleasant subject, if our hearts were suitably framed to delight in it, that there was as much evidence to the conviction of all men's senses, of his divine majesty, as of his human infirmity ; and that there are two concurring evidences, which enlighten one another ; which we shall shew, partly from his own works and miracles, and partly from the more than miraculous success and progress of the gospel after him.

For the first John testifies, that not only they saw the baseness of his outward shape, but " the glory of the only begotten Son of God, full of grace and truth," John i. 14. John the Baptist sent some of his disciples, because of their own unbelief, to enquire at Jesus, " Art thou he, or look we for another ?" And what answer gave he them ? What reason to convince them ? " Go," saith he, " and tell what ye have seen and heard, that the blind see, the lame walk, and the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor receive the gospel ;" and blessed is he whoever shall not for my outward unseemliness and baseness offend, but go by that, into the glory that shines out in such works. It is said in Luke vii. 21, that " the same hour he cured many." Before he spoke in answer, he answered them by his deeds. He gave a visible demon-

stration of that they doubted of, for they could not but see a power above created power in these works, which surpass nature and art. So many wonderful works done, so often repeated, before so many thousands, even many of his watchful and observant enemies; and all done so easily, by a word, infinite cures for number and quality wrought, which passed the skill of all physicians: devils dispossessed, life restored, water converted into excellent wine, without the maturation of the sun, or help of the vine tree; a little bread so strangely enlarged to the satisfaction of many thousands, and more remaining than was laid down; the winds and seas obeying his very word, and composing themselves to silence at his rebuke; and infinite more of this kind. Are they not, in the common apprehension of men, of a degree superior to that of nature? Who could restore life, but he that gave it? Whom would the devils obey, but him at whom they tremble? Who could transubstantiate water into wine, but he that created both these substances, and every year, by a long circuit of operations of nature, turns it into wine? Who could feed seven thousand with that which a few persons would exhaust, but he that can create it of nothing, and by whose word all this visible world started out of nothing? Nay, let us suppose these things to be done only by divine assistance, by some peculiar divine influence; then, certainly, if we consider the very end of this miraculous assistance of a creature, that it was to confirm the doctrine delivered by him, and make such a deep impression of the truth of it in the hearts of all, that it cannot be rooted out. This being the very genuine end of the wisdom of God in such works, it must needs follow, that all that which Christ revealed, both of himself and the Father, of his own being with him from the beginning, of his being one with him, and being his eternal Son; all this must needs be infallibly true; for it is not supposable to agree with the wisdom and goodness of God, to manifest so much of his infinite power and glory, in so extraordinary a manner, to bear testimony to an impostor or de-

ceiver. Therefore, though no more could be at first extorted from an enemy of Christ's doctrine, but that such mighty works did shew forth themselves, which could not be done but by the divine assistance and extraordinary help of God; yet even from that confession it may be strongly concluded, that seeing there was no other end imaginable of such extraordinary assistanee, but the confirmation of his new doctrine, and that of his divine nature, being one of the chief points of it, it must needs enforce, that he was not only helped by God, as Moses, but that he was God, and did these things by his own power. By this then it appears, that though after so many prophecies of him, and expectations from the beginning, we see but a man, in outward appearance despicable, and without comeliness and form; yet, if we could open the eyes of our souls, and fix them upon him, we behold, as through some small crannies, majesty shining in his misery, power discovering itself in his weakness, even that power that made the world, and man too. He was born indeed, yet of a virgin; he was weak and infirm himself, yet he healed all others' infirmities, even by his word. He was often an hungered, yet he could feed five thousand at one time, and seven thousand at another, upon that which would not have served his disciples, or but served them. He was wearied with travels, yet he gave rest to wearied souls. At length himself died, and that an ignominious death, notwithstanding he raised the dead by his word, and at length he raiseth himself by his own power. All this is included in this, "we have seen and handled." We saw him gloriously transfigured on the mount, where "his countenance did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as light," and two, the greatest persons in the Old Testament, came out of heaven, as it were, to yield up the administration of shadows to his substance. And we saw the heaven opening in the sight of many thousands, and heard a testimony given him from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, hear him." And then, when he was buried, and our hope with him, we saw him risen

again, and our hope did rise with him, and then some of us handled his sides, to get full persuasion; and all of us eat and drank, and conversed with him forty days. And to make a period, at length we saw him ascending up to heaven, and a cloud receiving him as a chariot, to take him out of our sight. Thus, "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, as of the only begotten Son of God."

But besides that which the life and death of Jesus Christ carries engraven in it of divinity, there is one miracle, which may be said to transcend all that ever was done, and it is one continued wonder since his resurrection,—even the virtue and power of that crucified Saviour to conquer the world, by such unsuitable, yea, contrary means and instruments. Heathenish religion was spread indeed universally through the whole world, but that was not one religion, but one name; for as many nations, as many fancied gods, and in one nation many. And true it is, that Mahometanism hath spread itself far; but by what means? Only by the power of the sword, and the terror of an empire. But here is a doctrine contrary to all the received customs, and inbred opinions of men, without any such means, prevailing throughout the world. Cyrus, when he was about to conquer neighbouring nations, gave out a proclamation, "If any man will follow me, if he be a footman, I will make him an horseman; if he have a village, I will give him a city; if a city, I will bestow on him a country," &c. Now, mark how contrary the proceeding of our Lord is: "Go and preach," saith he; "repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Here is his proclamation, "Repent ye." And, "if any man will be my disciple, let him take up his cross and follow me, and deny himself." What disproportioned means? And yet how infinitely greater success? Cyrus could not gain the Lacedemonians to his side for all that, but Christ, though poor, despised and contemptible, while alive, and at length thought to be quite vanquished by the most shameful death, when he is lift up upon the cross, to the

view and reproach of the world, he draws all men after him. He, by a few fishermen, not commanders, nor orators, persuades the world, and within a few years, that crucified Lord is adored further and wider than any empire did ever stretch itself. All the power, majesty, and success of Alexander, could never persuade the nations, no, not his own followers, to adore him as God ; but here one nailed to the cross, crowned with thorns, rejected of all men, and within a little space, adored, worshipped, suffered for throughout the nations, yea, kings and emperors casting down their crowns at his feet, many thousands counting it their honour to die upon that account. And do not the trophies of these apostolic victories remain to this day, in every corner of the world, after so many hundred years, in so many different, and so far distant nations ; that same name preached, and all knees bowing to it ? These things considered, how much done, and by means worse than nothing, it transcends all the miracles that ever the world wondered at. Now, my beloved, these things I mention for this end, that ye may be persuaded upon sure grounds, that he who is preached unto you, is " God able to save you," and according to the evidence of these grounds, ye may believe in him, and give that cordial assent to these everlasting truths, and that welcome entertainment to him in your heart that becomes. I think certainly there is very little even of this solid assent and persuasion of the gospel, in the hearts of the most part ; because they take things or names rather implicitly, and never seriously consider what they believe, and upon what grounds. But I know not a more pleasant and profitable meditation than this, if we would enter into a serious consideration of the truth and certainty of those things we have received. O how would such evidence open the heart to an entire and full closure with them, and embracement of them !

## V.

1 John i. 3.—That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us, &c.

**THERE** are many things that you may desire to hear, and, it may be, are usually spoken of in public, which the generality of men's hearts are more carried after. But truly, I should wrong myself and you both, if I should take upon me to discourse in these things, which, it may be, some desire, for direction or information concerning the times. For I can neither speak of them with so much certainty of persuasion as were needful, nor can I think it an advantage to shut out and exclude this which the apostle takes to declare, as the chief subject of his writing, which must needs be, if such things have place. Therefore I choose rather, with the apostle, to declare this unto you, which I can always do with a like certainty, and certainly might always be done to an infinitely greater advantage. There are these two peculiar excellencies in the gospel or word of life,—that it is never unprofitable, nor unseasonable; but doth contain in it at all times the greatest advantage to the souls of men, of infinitely more concernment and urgency, than any other thing can be supposed to be. And then we have no doubtful disputations about it. It varies not by times and circumstances. It may be declared with the same full assurances at all times, which certainly cannot be attained in other things. I would gladly know what Paul meant, when he said, "He determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified," 1 Cor. ii. 2; and "that he counted all dross and dung to the super-excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ," Phil. iii. 8. Sure it must amount to so much at least, that this should be the ordinary subject of the ministers of the gospel, since they are the ambassadors of Jesus Christ, not the orators of the state. Should not all



other things be thought impertinent and trivial in respect of this,—the salvation of sinners? And what hath a connection with that, but Jesus Christ, and the Word of life?

But though this be the most pleasant and profitable subject, yet I fear, that few of them who pretend a calling to this embassy, are thus qualified and disposed to speak and declare it, as the apostle imports, “That which we have heard and seen,” &c. It is true, there was something extraordinary in this, because they were to be first publishers of this doctrine, and to wrestle against the rebellion of men’s hearts, and the idolatry and superstition of the world: yea, to undertake such a work, as to subdue all nations by the preaching of a crucified man to them, which seemed to reason the most desperate and impossible employment ever given or taken. Therefore it behoved them to be the eye and ear-witnesses of his doctrine, life, miracles, and all; that being themselves persuaded beyond all the degrees of certainty that reason can afford, they might be the more confident and able to convince and persuade others. But yet there is something that holds by good proportion, that he that declares this eternal Life to others, should be well acquainted with it himself. He that preaches Jesus Christ, should first be conversant with him, and become his disciple and follower, before he can with any fruit become a teacher of others. Therefore the apostles, Acts i. “choose out one that had been with them from the beginning, gone in and out with them, seen and heard all.” O how incongruous is it for many of us, to take upon us to declare this unto others, which, I fear, few can say they have heard and seen in a spiritual manner, and handled by experience! No question, it prevails usually most with the heart, that comes from the heart. Affection is the fire that is most suitable to set affection on flame. It is a great addition to a man’s power and virtue of persuading others, to have a full persuasion settled in his own heart concerning these things. Now it is much to be lamented, that there is so little of this, and

so few carry the evidence on their hearts and ways, that they have been with Jesus, conversant in his company. I cannot say, but the ordinances, that carry their worth and dignity from God, and not from men, should be, notwithstanding, precious to your hearts; and that the word of life, however, and by whomsoever sent, if to you it be spoken, it should be suitably received with gladness of heart. But I confess, there is much of the success disappointed by the unsuitable carriage and disposition of instruments, which ought to be mourned under, as the greatest judgment of this nation.

Two principles have actuated this divine apostle,—the exceeding love of his master, for he loved much, as he was much beloved; and this carries him on all occasions to give so hearty a testimony to him, as you see, John xxi. 24, he characterizeth himself, or circumscribes his own name thus—“This is the disciple that testifieth these things, and wrote these things, and we know his testimony is true.” Where that divine love, which is but the result and overflowing of the love Christ carries to us, fills the heart. This makes the sweetest vent, and most fragrant opening of the mouth, whether in discourse, or in prayer, or preaching, that can be. O how it perfumes all the commendation of Christ! “Peter, lovest thou me? Feed my sheep.” These have a natural connection together,—the love of Christ in the heart, and the affectionate, hearty, serious declaration of him to others. And then, another principle hath moved him, the love of others’ salvation—“These things I declare, that ye may have fellowship with us.” Finding in his own experience how happy he was, what a pearl he had found, how rare a jewel,—eternal life,—he cannot hide it, but proclaims it. His next wish is, Now since I am thus blessed, O that all the world knew, and would come and share with me! I see that unexhausted fountain of life, that unemptiable sea of goodness, that infinite fulness of grace in Jesus Christ, that I, and you, and all that will, may come and be satisfied, and nothing diminished! There is that immense fulness in spiritual things, that su-

perabundance, and infinite excess over our necessities, that they may be enjoyed by many, by all, without envy or discontent, without prejudice to one another's fulness, which the scantiness and meanness of created things cannot admit. I believe, if ministers or Christians did taste of this, and had access into it to see it, and bless themselves in it; if they might enter into this treasury, or converse in this company, they would henceforth carry themselves as those who pity the world, and compassionate mankind. A man that is acquainted with this that is in Christ, would not find his heart easily stirred up to envy, or provoked upon others' prosperity or exaltation, but rather he would be constrained to commiserate all others, that they will not know nor consider wherein their own true tranquillity and absolute satisfaction consist. He that is lifted up to this blessed society, to converse with God, were it not for the compassion and mercy he owes to miserable mankind, he might laugh at the follies and vanities of the world, as we do at children. But as the *φιλανθρωπια*, the affectionate kind love our Saviour carried to human nature, made him often groan and sigh for his adversaries, and weep over Jerusalem, albeit his own joy was full, without ebb: so in some measure a Christian learns of Christ to be a lover and pitier of mankind, and then to be moved with compassion towards others, when we have fullest joy and satisfaction ourselves. O that we might be persuaded to seek after those things which may be gotten and kept without clamour and contention, about which there needs be no strife nor envy! O seek that happiness in fellowship with God, which, having attained, you lack nothing but that others may be as happy!

“These things I declare, that ye may have fellowship with us.” Oh! that ministers of the gospel might say so, and might, from their own experience, invite others to partake with them, as Paul requests others to be followers of him, as he was of Christ. So those who succeed Paul in this embassy of reconciliation, and are sent to

call to the feast, might upon good ground interpose their own experience thus. O come and eat with us! O come and share with us, for it will suffice us all without division! When some get into the favour of great and eminent persons, and have the honour to be their companions, they will be very loath to invite promiscuously others to that dignity. This society would beget competition and emulation. But, O of how different a nature is this fellowship! which, whosoever is exalted to, he hath no other grief, but that his poor brethren and fellow creatures either know not, or will not be so happy. Therefore, he will always be about the declaring of this to others. But if ministers cannot use such an expression to invite you to their fellowship, yet I beseech you, beloved in the Lord, let all of us be here invited by the apostle to partake of that which will not grieve you to have fellows and companions in, but rather add to your contentment.

Moreover, this may be represented to you, that ye are invited to the very communion with the apostles. The lowest and meanest amongst you have this high dignity in your offer,—to be fellow-citizens with the saints, with the eminent pillars of the church, the apostles.

It might be thought by the most part of Christians, who are more obscure, little known, and almost despised in the world, that they might not have so near access into the court of this great King. Some would think those who continued with him in his temptations, who waited on his own person, and were made such glorious instruments of the renovation of the world, should have some great preference to all others, and be admitted into the fellowship of the Father and the Son, beyond others; even as many would think, that Christ's mother and kinsmen in the flesh, should have had prerogatives and privileges beyond all his followers. But, O the wonderful mystery of the equal, free, and irrespective conveyance of this grace of the gospel in Christ Jesus! "neither bond nor free, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision." There

is "one common salvation," Jude, ver. 3, as well as "common faith," Tit. i. 4; and it is common to apostles, to pastors, to people, "to as many as shall believe in his name;" so that the poorest and meanest creature is not excluded from the highest privileges of apostles. We have that to glory in, in which Paul gloried, that is, the cross of Christ. We have the same access, by the same Spirit, unto the Father; we have the same Advocate to plead for us, the same blood to cry for us, the same hope of the same inheritance. In a word, "we are baptized into one body," and for the essentials and chief substantial of privilege and comfort, the head equally respects all the members. Yea, the apostles, though they had some peculiar gifts and privileges beyond others, yet they were forbidden to rejoice in these, but rather in those which were common to them with other saints. "Rejoice not," saith Christ, "that the spirits are subject unto you but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven," Luke x. 20. The height and depth of this drowns all other differences.

Now, my beloved, what can be more said for our comfort? Would you be as happy as John, as blessed as Paul? Would you think yourselves well, if it were possible to be in as near relation and communion with Christ as his mother and brethren? Truly, that is not only possible, but it is holden out to you, and you are requested to embrace the offer, and come and share with them. "He that heareth my words and doeth them, the same is my mother, and sister, and brother." You shall be as dear to him as his dearest relations, if you believe in him, and receive his sayings in your heart. Do not then entertain jealous and suspicious thoughts, because you are not like apostles or such holy men as are recorded in Scripture. If you forsake not your own mercy, you may have fellowship with them in that which they account their chiefest happiness. There is no difference of quality or condition, no distance of other things can hinder your communion with them. There are several

sizes and growths of Christians, both in light and grace. Some have extraordinary raptures and ecstasies of joy and sweetness; others attain not that, but are rather kept in attendance and waiting on God in his ways. But all of them have one common salvation. As the highest have some fellowship with the lowest in his infirmities; so the lowest have fellowship with the highest in his privilege. Such is the infinite goodness of God,—that which is absolutely necessary, and most important either to soul or body, is made more universal, both in nature and grace, as the common light of the sun to all, and the Sun of righteousness too, in an impartial way, shining on all them that come to him.

## VI.

1 John i. 3.—And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son, &c.

IT was both the great wisdom and infinite goodness of God, that he did not only frame a creature capable of society with others of his own kind, but that he fashioned him so, as to be capable of so high an elevation,—to have communion and fellowship with himself. It is less wonder of angels, because they are pure incorporeal spirits, drawing towards a nearer likeness to his nature, which similitude is the ground of communion; but that he would have one of the material and visible creatures below, that for the one half is made of the dust of the earth, advanced to this unconceivable height of privilege, to have fellowship with him,—this is a greater wonder. And for this end he breathed into man a spirit from heaven, that might be capable of conformity and communion with him, who is the Father of spirits. Now take this in the plainest apprehension of it, and you cannot but conceive that this is both the honour and happiness of man. It is honour and dignity, I say, because the nature of that

consists in the applause and estimation of those that are worthy, testified one way or another ; and the highest degrees of it rise according to the degree or dignity of the persons that esteem us, or give us their fellowship and favour. Now truly, according to this rule, the honour is incomparable, and the credit riseth infinitely above all the airy and fancied dignities of men ;—for the footstool to be elevated up to the throne, for the poor contemptible creature to be lifted up to the society and friendship of the most high and glorious God, the only fountain of all the hierarchies of heaven, or degrees upon earth. So much as the distance is between God and us, so much proportionally must the dignity rise, to be advanced out of this low estate to fellowship with God. The distance between creatures is not observable in regard of this, and yet poor worms swell, if either they be lifted up a little above others, or advanced to familiarity with those that are above them. But what is it to pride ourselves in these things, when we are altogether, higher and lower, at one view, as grasshoppers in his sight ? Therefore man, being in honour, and understanding not wherein his true honour and dignity consists, associates himself to beasts. Only the soul that is aspiring to this communion with God, is extracted out of the dregs of beastly mankind, and is elevated above mankind, and associated to blessed apostles, and holy angels, and spirits made perfect. And that were but little, though it be an honour above regal or imperial dignities ; but it is infinitely heightened by this,—that their association is with God, the blessed and holy Trinity.

Now herein consists man's happiness too, for the soul being enlarged in its capacity and appetite, far beyond all visible things, is never fully satiated, or put to rest and quiet, till it be possessed with the chiefest and most universal good, that is, God ; and then all the motions of desire cease,—then the soul rests from its labours,—then there is a peace and eternal rest proclaimed in the desires of the soul,—“ Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the

Lord hath dealt bountifully with me," Psal. cxvi. 7. O what a poor short *requiem* do men sing to their own hearts from other enjoyments! Oftentimes men's hearts, whether dreaming or waking, speak in this manner.—Soul, take thy rest; but how ill-grounded is that peace, and how false a rest, daily experience in part witnesseth, and the last day will fully declare! But O, how much better and wiser were it for you to seek the favour and light of his countenance upon you, and to be united to him who is the fountain of life; so ye might truly, without hazard of such a sad reprehension as that fool got. or grievous disappointment, say, Soul, take thy rest in God!

Man was advanced to this dignity and happiness, but he kept not his station, for the great dragon falling down from that pinnacle of honour he had in heaven, drew down with him, "the third part of the stars of heaven, and cast them to the earth." And thus man, who was in honour, is now associated with, and made like to beasts or devils. He is a stranger to God from the womb. All the imaginations of his heart tend to distance from God. He is exiled and banished from God's presence, the type whereof was his being driven out of the garden; and yet he is not long out, nor far away, when the infinite love of God moves an embassy to send after him and to recall him. Many messengers are sent before-hand to prepare the way, and to dispose men's hearts to peace; many prophecies were, and fore intimations of that great embassy of love, which at length appeared; for God sent his Son, his own Son, to take away the difference, and make up the distance. And this is the thing that is declared unto us by those eye and ear-witnesses, to this end, that we may know how to return to that blessed society which we had forsaken, to our own eternal prejudice. Is man banished out of the paradise of God into the accursed earth? Then the Son is sent out from his own palace and the paradise above, to come into this world, and to save the world. Is there such a gulph between us and heaven? Christ hath put his own body between, to fill it up. Do the



cherubim watch with flaming fire to keep us from life? Then the Son hath shed his own blood in abundance, to quench that fire, and so to pacify and compose all in heaven and earth. Is there such odds and enmity between the families of heaven and earth? He sent his Son, the chief heir, and married him with our nature, and in that eternal marriage of our nature with him, he hath buried in everlasting oblivion all the difference, and opened a way for a nearer and dearer friendship with God than was before. And when was it, I pray you, that God dwelt among men; first, in a tabernacle, then in a fixed temple, even among the rebellious sons of men? and that so many were admitted and advanced again to communion with God? Abraham had the honour to be the friend of God. O incomparable title, comprehending more than king or emperor! Was it not all from this,—the anticipating virtue of that uniting and peace making sacrifice? It was for his sake who was to come, and in his flesh to lay a sure foundation for eternal peace and friendship between God and man.

Now, that you see the ground of our restitution to that primitive fellowship with God, my earnest desire is, that ye would lay hold on this opportunity. Is such an high thing in our offer? Yea, are you earnestly invited to it by the Father and the Son? Then, sure, it might at the first hearing beget some inward desire, and kindle up some holy ambition after such a happiness. Before we know further what is in it, (for the very first sound of it imports some special and incomparable privilege,) might not our hearts be inflamed, and ought we not to enquire at our own hearts, and speak thus unto them, Have I lived so long a stranger to God, the fountain of my life? Am I so far bewitched with the deceitful vanities of the world, as not to think it incomparably better, to rise up above all created things to communicate with the Father and the Son? And shall I go hence without God and without Christ, when fellowship with them is daily, freely, and plentifully holden forth? I beseech you consider

where it must begin, and what must be laid down for the foundation of this communion, even your union with Jesus Christ, the mediator between God and man; and you cannot be one with him, but by forsaking yourselves, and believing in him; and thence flows that constant abode and dwelling in him, which is the mutual entertainment of Christ and a soul, after their meeting together,—“Can two walk together except they be agreed?” We are by nature enemies to God; now, certainly reconciliation and agreement must intervene by the blood of the cross, before any friendly and familiar society be kept. Let this, then, be your first study, and it is first declared in the gospel, Jesus Christ is holden out as partaking with you in all your infirmities. He is represented as having fellowship with us in our sins and curses; in our afflictions and crosses. He hath fellowship in our nature, to bear our sins and infirmities. Now, since he hath partaken in these, you are invited to come and have fellowship with him in his gifts and graces; in the precious merits of his death and suffering; in his rising again and returning to glory. And this is the exchange he makes and declares in the gospel,—I have taken your sins and curses, O come and take my graces, and that which is purchased by my blood. Now this is the first beginning of a soul’s renewed fellowship with God; and it is the foundation of all that is to come, to embrace this offer, to accept him cordially as he is presented to us; and to pacify and quiet our own hearts by faith in that he hath done. And this being once laid down as the ground-stone, the soul will grow up into more communion with him.

To speak aright of this communion would require more acquaintance with it, than readily will be found amongst us; but it is more easy to understand in what it is exercised and entertained, than to bring up our hearts unto it. Certainly, it must neither be taken so low and wide, as if it consisted all in those external duties and approaches of men unto God; for there is nothing capable of communion

with the Father of spirits, but a spirit ; and sure I am, the most part of us remove them, and act a little that way. It is a lamentable thing that men pretend to please God with such vain empty shows, and bodily appearances, without any serious exercise of their souls, and attention of their minds in divine worship. Neither yet must it be taken so high, and made so narrow, as if it consisted only in those ravishments of the soul after God, which are joined with extraordinary sweetness and joy, or in such rare pieces of access and liberty ; for though that be a part of it, yet it is neither universal to all God's children, nor yet constant in any. There may be some solid serious attendance on God in his ordinances, which may have more true substantial life in it, and more of the marrow of Christianity in it, though a soul should not be acquainted with those raptures, nor ever carried without the line of an equal walking with God. Therefore that which I would exhort you to, is to acquaint yourselves with Jesus Christ, and you shall find a new way opened in him, by which you may boldly come to God, and having come to God in him, you are called to walk with him, to entertain that acquaintance that is made, till all the distance and estrangeness of your hearts be worn out. And I know not any thing which is more apt, either to beget or preserve this fellowship, than the communication of your spirits often with him in prayer, and with his word in meditation. And this is not to be discharged as a custom, but the love of God within, drawing the heart willingly towards communication with him, and constraining to pour out your requests to him, and wait on him, even though we should not find that sensible sweetness that sometimes is found. It were a happy advancement in this fellowship, if converse with God, whether in prayer and solemn retirements, or in meditation, or in our ordinary walking, were become the delight of our hearts, at least, that they might be carried that way towards the entertaining the thoughts of his majesty, his glory, and grace, and goodness, and wisdom shining everywhere, as from a natural instinct, even when

we are not engaged with the present allurements of that sweetness that sometimes accompanies it.

## VII.

1 John i. 3, 4.—And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.

It was sin that did first break off that fellowship that was between God and man, and cut off that blessed society, in which the honour and happiness of man consisted. But that fundamental bond being loosed, it hath likewise untied all the links of society of men among themselves, and made such a general dispersion and dissipation of mankind, that they are almost like wild beasts, raging up and down; and in this wilder than beasts, that they devour one another, which beasts do not in their own kind; and they are like fishes of the sea, without rule and government. Though there be some remnants of a sociable inclination in all men, that shews itself in their combinings in societies, and erecting governments; yet generally that which is the true bond and ligament of men, which alone can truly knit them together, is broken, that is, love, the love of God and our neighbours. And therefore, notwithstanding of all the means used to reduce, and to contain mankind in order and harmony by government, yet there is nothing but continual rents, distractions, dissipations, divisions, and dissolutions in commonwealths amongst themselves, and between nations; so that all men may be represented as lions, tigers, wolves, serpents, and such like unsociable creatures, till the gospel come to tame them and subdue them, as it is often holden out in the prophets, Isa. ii. 4, xi. 6, 7, 8, and lxxv. 25.

Now indeed you have here the express end and purpose of the gospel,—to make up these two great breaches in the creature, between God and men, and between men

and men. It is a gospel of peace. Wherever it takes hold of men's spirits, it reduceth all to a peaceable temper, joins them to God, and one to another: for the very sum and substance of it is the love of God to mankind, and proposed for this end,—to engage the love of man again; and love is the glue, the cement that alone will conjoin unto this fellowship. It is a strange thing, and much to be lamented, that Christendom should be a field of blood, an aceldama, beyond other places of the world; that, where the gospel is pretended to be received, men have so far put off even humanity, as thus to bite and devour one another. Certainly it is, because where it is preached, it is not believed: therefore, sin taketh occasion by it to become the more sinful. Always let us take heed to this, that it is the great purpose and grand design of the gospel preached to us, to restore us to a blessed society and fellowship with the Father, and, withal, to a sweet fellowship among ourselves, for both you see are here.

We are called to fellowship with the Father; and what is that, but to have the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ thy father, and thou to be his son by adoption of grace? It is certainly the very marrow and extract of the whole covenant, and all the promises thereof.—“I will be your Father, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty,” 2 Cor. vi. 18. “I go,” saith Christ, “to your Father and my Father, and to your God and my God.” O what a sweet complication and interchange of relations! Job xx. 17

“I will be your God and ye shall be my people.” Here is the epitome of all happiness and felicity. In this word all is inclosed, and without this nothing is to be found that deserves the desires of an immortal spirit. For hence it follows, that a soul is filled with the all-fulness of God, Eph. iii. 19; for that is made over to thee who believest the gospel, and thou hast as real a right and title to it as men have to their father's inheritance. Then to have fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ is another branch of this dignity; and this is that which introduceth the other.

Christ is the middle person, the Mediator between God and man, given for this end,—to recover men from their woful dispersion and separation from God, and reduce them again to that blessed society. And therefore our acquaintance, as it were, first begins with him, and by him we are led to the Father: “No man can come to the Father but by the Son;” therefore, if you have his friendship you have done the business, for he and his Father are one.

Now this fellowship, to branch it forth more particularly, is either real or personal: Real, I mean, *κοινωνία*, *bonorum*, a communion of all good things, a communion with him in his nature, offices, and benefits;—and this must be laid down as the foundation-stone of this fellowship. He came near us, to partake of flesh and blood with us, that we might have a way, a new and living way consecrated, even the vail of his flesh, to come to God by; for certainly this gives boldness to a soul to draw near to God, with some expectation of success and acceptation, when it is seriously considered that our nature is so nearly conjoined already to God. By this step a soul climbs up to the majesty of God; and by means of this, we become partakers of the divine nature, as God of human nature, 2 Pet. i. 4. So by the same degrees we ascend to God that God hath descended to us. He drew near us by our nature, and we, by the intervention of that same, ascend to him, and receive his image and stamp on our souls; for the Lord did stamp his own image upon Christ’s human nature, to make it a pattern to us, and to represent to us, as in a visible symbol and pledge, what impression he would put upon us. Then we have fellowship with him in his offices. I need not branch them out severally;—you know what he was anointed for, to be a Priest, to offer sacrifice, and to reconcile us to God, and to make intercession for us: to be a King, to rule us by his word and Spirit, and defend us against our enemies: to be a Prophet, to reveal the will of God to us, and instruct us in the same. Here is a large field of fellowship. We have admittance, by faith in Jesus Christ, to the real advantage

and benefit of all these. There is nothing in them but it relates to us, and redounds to us. The living virtue of that sacrifice is as fresh and recent this day, to send up a savour of rest to heaven, and to pacify a troubled conscience, as the first day it was offered. That perfect sacrifice is as available to thy soul, as if thou hadst offered it thyself; and this day ye have the benefit of his prayers in heaven. We partake of the strong cries and tears in the days of his flesh, and of his intercession since, more than of our own supplications. What shall I say? Ye have one to teach you all things that are needful for you, one to subdue your sins under you; and by virtue of fellowship with Jesus Christ in these offices, there is something derived from it, and communicated to us by it, that we should be kings and priests to God our Father: kings to rule over our own spirits and lusts, in as far as grace reigns in us to eternal life, and that is truly an heroic royal spirit. that overcomes himself and the world; and priests, to offer unto God continually the sacrifice of prayer and praises, 1 Pet. i. 3, 4, 5, which are sweet-smelling and pleasant in his sight; yea, we should offer up our own bodies as a reasonable service, Rom. xii. 1; and this is a holy and living sacrifice, when we dedicate and consecrate all our faculties, members, and abilities to his will and service; and do not spare to kill our lusts, which are his and our enemies.

Let us sum up all in this,—whatsoever grace or gift is in Christ Jesus, whatsoever pre-eminence he hath above angels and men; whatsoever he purchased, he purchased by his obedient life, and patience in death; there is nothing of all that, but the soul may be admitted to fellowship in it, by its union with him by faith. Have him, and have all that he hath: faith makes him yours, and all that he hath is a consequential appendix to himself. The word of the gospel offers him freely to you, with all his benefits, interests, and advantages. O that our hearts may be induced to open to him!

Now being thus united to Jesus Christ, that which I

would persuade you next to, is a personal communion, that is, a suitable entertainment of him, a conjunction of your soul to him by love, and a conspiracy of all your endeavours henceforth to please him. It is certain, that true friendship is founded on a conjunction and harmony of souls by affection, by which they cease to be two, and become in a manner one; for love makes a kind of transport of the soul into another, and then all particular and proper interests are drowned in oblivion,—no more mine and thine, but he makes an interchange, mine thine, and thine mine, my heart thine, and thy honour mine. Now certain it is, that in this God hath given us a rare pattern, and leads us the way; for he declares his love to the world in the rarest effects of it, which give the clearest demonstrations possible,—“God so loved the world that he sent his Son.” And you have the most infallible argument of the Son’s love,—“Greater love hath no man than this,” to lay down his life for his friends,—but he for his enemies. Now then, you see the heart of God and his Son Jesus Christ is fixed from everlasting on the sons of men; so unalterably, and so fully set towards them, that it hath transported the Son out of his own glory, and brought him down in the state of a servant. But it is not yet known what particular persons are thus fixed upon, until that everlasting love break out from under ground, in the engagement of thy soul’s love to him; and till he have fastened this chain, and set this seal on thy heart, which makes thee impatient to want him. Thou knowest not the seal that was on his heart from eternity. But now the love of a believer being the result of his love,—this is it that is the source and spring of constant communion, and it vents itself in converse with God, and daily entertainment of him in our spirits and ways. There is a keeping of company with him in prayer and meditation, and all the ordinances. There is a communication and familiar conference of the heart with him, either in thinking on him, or pouring out our requests to him. There is a mutual and daily intercourse and correspondence of that soul



with God, in answering his word by obedience, in praying to him, and receiving answers from him, and then returning his answer again with a letter of thanks and praise, as it were. These are the ways to increase that love of God, and kindle it up to a higher flame; and it being thus increased, it gathers in all the endeavours and abilities of the soul, and sets all on fire, as a sweet-smelling sacrifice to please him. It is henceforth the great study of the soul, to remove all things that are offensive to him; for the entertaining of sin, his enemy, is most inconsistent with this true fellowship and friendship. "If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me," Psal. lxxvi. 18. This will mar that sweet correspondence in prayer and praises; for it is a breach of peace and covenant to regard and maintain his enemies. Therefore the soul that loves God, will study to compose itself in all things to his good pleasure, as well as his love, that is strong as death, puts him upon a careful watching, to do all things for our profit; and so this takes in our whole carriage and walking in religious approaches, or in common businesses, to have this our great design,—conversing with God and walking to all well-pleasing.

Now if we were once enrolled in this blessed fellowship with the Father and the Son, then it follows, as a fruit and result of this, that we should have fellowship one with another. And truly the more unity with God, the more unity amongst ourselves: for he is the uniting, cementing principle, he is the centre of all Christians; and as lines, the further they are from the centre, the further distant they are one from another, so the distance and elongation of souls from God, sets them at further distance amongst themselves. The nearer we come every one to Jesus Christ, the nearer we join in affection one to another; and this is imported in that of Christ's prayer, "That they may be one in us," John xvii. 21, 22. No unity but in that one Lord, and no perfect unity, but in a perfect union with him. I would exhort to study this more,—to have fellowship one with another, as mem-

bers of the same body, by sympathy, by mutual helping one another in spiritual and temporal things. Even amongst Christians that live obscurely in a city, in a village, there is not that harmonious agreement and consent of hearts, that contention and plea of love, of gentleness and forbearance, who shall exercise most of that: but there are many jealousies, heart-burnings, grudgings, strifes, evil-speakings, &c., to the stumbling of others, and the weakening of yourselves, which certainly argue that ye are much carnal, and walk as men, and that the love of God, and fellowship with him, is waxed cold, and is languished and dead, &c.

### VIII.

1 John i. 4.—And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.

ALL motions tend to rest and quietness. We see it daily in the motions below, and we believe it also of the circular revolutions of the heavens above, that there is a day coming in which they shall cease, as having performed all they were appointed for. And as it is in things natural, so it is in things rational in a more eminent way. Their desires, affections, and actions, which are the motions and stretches of the soul towards that it desires and apprehends as good, tends of their own nature, and are directed by the very intention of the soul, to some rest and tranquillity, some joy and contentation of spirit. If other things that have no knowledge, have their centre of rest, how much more must man, who is an understanding creature, have it by the ordination and appointment of God? But there is this wide difference in the point of capacity of happiness between man and other creatures, that they, whatsoever excellent virtues or properties they have, yet know them not themselves, and so can neither enjoy what excellency themselves have, nor have use of what is in others. For to what purpose is it to shine forth, if there be no eye to

see? What advantage hath the rose in its fragrancy, if it cannot smell itself? That which is not perceived, is as if it were not. And therefore it is an evident testimony, that all these visible things were created, not for themselves, but for man's sake, who knows them, can use them, and enjoy them. Here is then the peculiar capacity that God hath given to man,—to discern and know what he seeks, what he hath, and possesses, that so he may be able to enjoy it, or use it, according to the nature of it. This is a great point of God's image and conformity with him, whose infinite blessedness and joy riseth from that perfect comprehension and intuitive beholding of himself, and his own incomprehensible riches. So then, man's happiness or misery must depend upon this, both what the soul fixeth upon, and what it apprehendeth to be in it. For, if that eternal and universal good, the all-fulness of God, be the centre of the soul's desires and endeavours, and there be apprehended and discovered in God that infinite excellency and variety of delights, which nothing else can afford so much as a shadow of, then there cannot but result from such a conjunction of the soul's apprehension, suitable to the fulness of God, and of the excellency and goodness of God, suitable to the desires of the soul, such a rest and tranquillity, such joy and satisfaction, as cannot choose but make the soul infinitely happier than the enjoyment of any other thing could do.

This being the thing then, which all men's desires naturally tend unto; this tranquillity and perfect satisfaction of the heart being that which carries all men's hearts after it, and that which men seek for itself, and which they seek in all other things, the great misery of man is, that he mistakes the way to it, and seeks it where it is not to be found. The generality of men are so far degenerated both from the impression of a divine majesty, and the sense of an immortal being within themselves, that they imagine to content and ease their own hearts, in these outward, unconstant, perishing things; and so their life is spent in catching at shadows, in feeding on

the wind. in labouring in the fire. There is nothing so plentifully satisfies our expectations, as can quit the cost, and recompense the expense of our labour, toil, grief, and travel about it. There is nothing therefore but a continual, restless agitation of the heart, from one thing to another, and that in a round, circling about, from one thing that now displeases or disappoints, to things that were formerly loathed; as a sick man turns him from one side to another, or changes beds often, and at length returns, expecting to find some ease where he lay at first. And it may be judged, that all circular motions are eternal, and so they can never be supposed to attain their end; that is, rest and tranquillity. Therefore a soul thus carried in a round, by the vain imaginations of his heart, is likely never to settle and find solid rest and peace. Nay, how is it possible that they can give that tranquillity and contentation to the heart and soul of man, that are so utterly in their natures disproportioned to it? Both because they are only suited to the senses, and likewise that they are changeable. Now the soul is framed with a higher capacity, and can no more be satiated with visible things, than a man that is hungry can be satisfied with gold; and besides, it is immortal, and must have something to survive all the changes of time, and therefore is likely to rest no where, but in that which hath eternal stability. Now, though these things cannot truly fill the heart, yet they swell the belly, like the east-wind, or like the prodigal's husks,—fill it with wind, which causeth many torments and distempers in the soul; and though they cannot give ease, yet they may be as thorns to prick and pierce a man through with many sorrows, as our Saviour speaks. So that there is no more wisdom or gain in this, than in gathering an armful of thorns, and inclosing and pressing hard unto them,—the more hardly and strongly we grip them, the more grievously they pierce us; or as if a man would flee into a hedge of thorns in a tempest,—the further he thrust into it, he is the worse pricked: and that which he is fallen into is worse than that he fleeth

from. I am sure all your experiences give a harmonious testimonious testimony to this, that there is no solid, permanent, constant, and equable heart-joy and contentation in all the fancied and imaginary felicities that this world adores. There is nothing of these things, that is not lesser, and lower in actual possession, nor in the first apprehension of them afar off. Nothing in them answers either our desires or expectations; and therefore, instead of peace and tranquillity, they breed more inward torment and disquiet, because of that necessary and inevitable disappointment that attends them. Therefore the apostle passeth all these things in silence, when he is to write of purpose, to give a fulness of joy; for he knows that in them there is neither that joy, nor that fulness of joy he would wish for from them; but it is other things he writes for this end.

Now indeed there hath been some wiser than others, that have their apprehension far above the rest of mankind, and have laboured to frame some rules and precepts to lead man into this true rest and tranquillity. And truly, in this they have done much to discover the vanity and madness of the common practice of men, and to draw man from sensible and outward things, to things invisible and spiritual. Yet there is a defectiveness in all the rules that natural reason can reach unto. There is some crookedness withal adheres to them, which shews our departure from our original. There are many excellent discourses of morality in heathen writings, which may be very subservient to a Christian, and useful to the composing and settling of his mind, amidst all the fluctuations and uncertainties of this world. They may come well in as subsidies and guards to a Christian's heart, to preserve that peace and joy it hath from God, and keep out the ordinary tumultuous passions that disturb the most part of men. But here is the lamentable failing, that while they call a man off things without, as adventitious, they lead him but into his own spirit within, as if he could there find that rest in the very enjoyment of his poor, miserable, wretched self.

But Christ Jesus calls us into our own spirits, not to dwell there; for O what a loathsome and irksome habitation is a defiled heart, and a guilty conscience! But rather, that finding nothing of that joy and refreshment within, we may then freely and fully forsake ourselves, as well as the world without, and transport into God in Christ, the only habitation of joy and delight, that being filled with anguish from the world, and from ourselves, we may more willingly divorce from both, and agree to join unto Jesus Christ, and to embrace him in our hearts, who is the only fountain of life and joy; who had no other errand and business from heaven, but to repair man's joy,—as grievous a breach as any in the creation,—a thing as much missed and sought after. as any thing, yea, sought after in all things that are sought: John xv. 11, "These things I have spoken to you, that your joy may be full." Therefore the apostle propounds this as the end of his writing on this subject, "The Word of life; these things I write that your joy may be full;" and the way to attain the fullness of joy, he expressed in the former verse, "by fellowship with the Father and the Son."

That which makes all other things disproportioned to the soul of man, to give it this joy, is the extreme unsuitableness between them. The soul hath an infinite capacity, and, besides, an immortality of endurance, but they are condemned under impotency to supply that infinite void and inconstancy, by which they must needs perish, and leave the soul without all comfort, and with more anxiety. But in those things written here, we find all things suited and proportioned to the very great exigence of the soul. There is a suitableness in them, because of their spiritual nature, whereby they may close immediately with thy spirit. Other things are material and corporeal, and what union, what fellowship can a spirit be supposed to have with them? They are extrinsic, adventitious things, that never come to a nearer union with thy soul; and though they could, they would debase thy soul, and not exalt it, because of a baser inferior nature.

But these things,—Jesus Christ, eternal life in him, these precious promises of the gospel, these spiritual privileges of sonship, &c., these are of a more divine nature, and by meditation and faith souls come to close with them. These are inward things more near the soul that believes, than himself is to himself; and so he may always carry them about in his heart, which may be a spring of everlasting joy. “This no man can take from him.” John xvi. 22. For the ground and fountain is inward, seated without the reach of all these vicissitudes and changes. Then, as they have a suitableness, so they have a fulness in them, to create fulness of joy. They are cordials to the heart, things that are in their own nature refreshing to the soul, and apt to beget heart-joy. Other things are not suitable to this, to produce any such inward soul-complacency. The things that are from without reach not so deep as the heart; they make their impressions rather on the outward senses, to tickle and please them, or the countenance, to put some pleasing shape upon it. But the wise man pronounceth all those joys that arise from external things, to be superficial, only skin deep. “In the midst of laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness,” Prov. xiv. 13. *Extrema gaudii luctus occupat.* There is no solid recreation to the soul, in its retired thoughts, from all the delights of the senses; it is but like the pleasure of the itch, which no man esteems pleasure. But besides, as the things of the gospel affect the heart and soul, by bringing soul-mercies, and treasures, as forgiveness of sin, hope of heaven, &c., so there is a fulness in them, which may answerably fill all the corners of the heart with joy. There is an unexhaustedness in these things, an universality in Christ;—“all in all, all the treasures of wisdom are in him;” and may not this cause surely a high spring-tide of joy? The heart is eased upon the lowest clear apprehension of Christ and the gospel. It gives a heart-serenity and calmness to a troubled soul, that nothing else could do. Yet to make up the fulness of joy, as well as the solidity of it; to extend the measure of it, as well as to be-

get the true quality, it is requisite that not only there be a fulness in the object,—that is, full, superabundant, ample matter of rejoicing; but there must be a kind of fulness in the apprehension. It must be represented fully as it is, and the clouds of unbelief scattered; and then indeed, upon the full aspect of the gospel, and Christ in it, there is a fulness of joy that flows into the soul, as the sea is filled upon the full aspect of the moon. Oh! that we could believe this, that there is a fulness of joy here, and no where else. Certainly this alone being pondered and sunk into our hearts, would be a powerful reformer in us, and among us. How would it carry men's hearts to a disgracing and despising all the things that are held in admiration by men! How would it turn the channel of men's judgments, opinions, affections, and conversations! For certainly whithersoever the tide of joy flows, thither the heart is carried, and this it is that all men are seeking, though they take many contrary and divers ways, as their own fancy leads them. Now, if once this were established in thy soul, that here is that truth and fulness of joy, which elsewhere is ignorantly and vainly sought, would it not divert thy desires, and turn the current of thy affections and endeavours, to fall into this ocean of gladness and delight? Elsewhere there is neither true joy, nor full joy,—*nec verum ec plenum gaudium*. There is no verity in it; it is but an external garb and shadow, and there is no plenty or fulness. It fills not the hand of the reaper, it satisfieth not his very hunger. But here, when a soul is possessed with Christ by faith, and dwelleth in God by love, there is both reality and plenty. All the dimensions of the heart may be filled up. Some allegorize upon the triangular composition of men's heart, that no orbicular thing, such as this world, can fill it exactly without vacuity, but only the blessed and holy Trinity. Truly we may conceive this fulness of joy, excluding all the latent griefs of the heart, and filling up all the vacant corners, doth flow from that blessed fellowship of the Father and the Son. Now, though these two be only men-



tioned, yet the Holy Ghost must not be excluded, for the apostolic prayer doth attribute chiefly our fellowship with God to the Spirit; so that it is the Spirit unites our hearts, and associates them to God, and that seems to correspond between him and us. So then there is such a fellowship with the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, that leaves no vacancy in the heart, that fills all the dimensions and corners of it with peace and joy.

But add unto this, in the third place, that these things have not only a fulness, but withal a durableness; not only plenty, but besides, eternity and perpetuity, to correspond to the immortality of the soul. And this certainly is a great congruity, and so makes up much beauty and harmony; for what more incongruous and unsuitable, than for an immortal spirit to spend itself, and give up itself to that which is not, which must leave it, which is mortal, and fading in its own nature, without which, it must continue infinitely longer than it can enjoy it? And what more comely, than for an immortal thing to associate with eternal things, and to derive its joy from an eternal spring? For when all things visible are done away, and things mortal abolished, then its joy none can take from it; because it takes its joy from that which must survive all these changes. Suppose any thing could for the present give a fulness of joy, and absolute content to the heart, yet if we imagine that that thing may be separated and disjoined from the heart, and cease to be, certainly the very expectation of such an eternal separation would almost extinguish all the joy, and make it dry up of the fulness: for, may a soul think, what shall I do for ever when this well dries? Whence shall I draw water of joy? Out of what well? But now, that fear is removed, and the soul needs not lose the sweetness of the present enjoyment of God, through anxious foresight of the future, because he may know, that the perfect fulness that shall never ebb, is but coming, and the sun is but ascending yet towards the meridian, from whence he shall never go

down, but stand fixed, to the eternal wonder and delight of angels and men.

Now, though it be true, that Christians here, have neither that plenty, nor that perpetuity of this joy, that the object of it gives ground for; though their hearts be often filled with griefs and sorrows, partly from outward, partly from inward evils and afflictions; yet certainly this ariseth but from the dark apprehension, dim belief, and slight consideration of those things that Christ spoke, and his apostles wrote unto us. We might, no question, keep our hearts in more peace and tranquillity, in all the commotions of the times, or alterations in ourselves, if we did more stedfastly believe the gospel, and keep more constant fellowship with God. But, however it be, there is radically a fulness of joy in every believer's heart. That seed is sown, that shall one day be ripe, of fulness of joy; it is always lying at the root, and reserved for them. O let us lay these things to heart, which being laid to heart, and laid up in the heart, will fill it with this sweet fragrant perfume of peace and joy! They are written for this end; let us hear them for this end too, that our joy may be full. It is true, indeed, that this fulness of joy suits only the life to come, when the vessel is both enlarged and strengthened to contain it. Things that have strong spirits in them, must have strong new bottles, such as our crazy mortal bodies are not; therefore the Lord hath reserved the just fulness, the overflowings of this joy, for the time that the soul shall be purified from all sin, and the body delivered from all corruption. Because that sin lurks in many corners of the heart now, therefore this joy cannot fill up the heart and all the vacuities of it; for it is of so pure and heavenly a nature, that it will not compound and intermingle with sin or sinful lusts. But when nothing of that remains in the heart then it flows in apace, and leaves no corner of the heart unsatisfied and unsupplied. I would have you, who get some tastes of this joy and peace by the way, not disquieted and troubled, because it abides not to be ordinary food. If

you be set down again to your ordinary spare diet of manna in the wilderness, and have not these first fruits and grapes of Canaan often sent to you, think it not strange, for the fulness which you seek you are not capable of here, but you shall be capable of it hereafter. You ought with patience to wait for that day, "when your joy shall be full," as Christ is full; full measure heaped up, and running over, will he mete out unto you then; and this shall be without the fear of any ebb or diminution of it for all eternity. Neither shall this fulness, and constant fulness, cloy the soul or breed any satiety in it. There is fulness of joy without surfeit, without satiety; that which they have, they shall always desire, and that which they desire, they shall always have: everlasting desire and everlasting delight being married together in their fulness. But yet so much is attainable here, as may truly be called fulness, in regard of the world. The fulness of joy that all the pleasures of this earth can afford, is but scarcity and want, to the inward fulness of joy and contentation the poorest believers may have in God, reconciled in Christ. That which the wise man gives as the character of all earthly joy suits well, "I said of laughter, it is mad; and of mirth, what doeth it?" Eccl. ii. 2. Truly, it cannot be supposed to be more real than that which is the ground and spring of it. It must be a perfunctorious, superficial, and empty joy, that is derived and distilled from such vanities. Nay, there is a madness in it besides, for men's apprehensions to swell so excessively towards poor, narrow, and limited things. It is a monster in reason, to put such a value upon nothing, and make ourselves glad upon our own dreams and fancies. There is such a manifest abuse and violation of reason in it, that it can be supposed to proceed from nothing but a distemper in men's hearts. But besides this, there are two other characters of it given, Prov. xiv. 13, "Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness." There is no pure earthly joy; for it hath always a mixture of grief and sadness in the inward re-

tired closet of the heart. It is of such deadness and inefficacy, that it drives not out of the heart all discontentments and anxieties; but if the most jovial man, that seems to be transported with his delights, would but retire within and examine his own conscience, he would find those delights have but little power to affect his heart. He will find terrible and dreadful representations there, that his joys may well for a time darken them, but cannot drive them away. And then it is the very natural law and fatal necessity that grief follows those joys at the heels, yea, is perpetually attending them, to come in their place. God hath so conjoined them together, and so disposed them, that men's joy shall be mingled with grief, but their grief is pure and unmixed; and that he who draws up joy to him from the creatures, must draw grief and vexation in that same chain, inseparably annexed to it by the wise ordination of God.

But there are joys of the Holy Ghost arising from the intimation and apprehension of the gospel, from the consideration of the grace and goodness of God manifested in it, and the experience of that in the soul, which are of another stamp and nature. These, indeed, affect the heart, and give the answer of a good conscience in the blood of Christ, which is a continual feast. These drive out the bitter and dreadful apprehensions of sin and wrath; these sweeten and refresh the soul in all worldly afflictions and griefs. "The heart of man knoweth his own bitterness, and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy." Prov. xiii. 10. Indeed, the torments and perplexities of a troubled soul are better felt by themselves than known by others, and so are the joys of that heart that apprehends Jesus Christ, and peace purchased in him. They are such as no man that is a stranger to such things in his experience can apprehend. It is a joy unspeakable. O what unspeakable content gives it to the heart! And truly if you did not interpose the clouds of unbelief and sin between you and his shining countenance, there needed not be so often an eclipse in the joys

of believers. Yet the day is coming that ye shall see him fully as he is, and nothing be interposed between you and him, and then your joy shall be full, &c.

## IX.

1 John i. 5.—This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, &c.

THE great design of the gospel is to make up the breach of man's joy, and open up the way to the fulness of it; and therefore it is the good news and glad tidings of great joy, the only best message that ever came to the world. Now it shews unto us the channel in which this river of gladness and joy runs; it discovers what is the way of the conveyance of it to the soul, and what are the banks it runs between; and that is fellowship with the Father and the Son. In this channel that river of delight runs, between the banks of the love of God to us, and our love to him. Herein a soul is happy, and accounts itself happy; and truly, in so much do we profit by the word, and answer the design of the gospel, by how much we estimate our happiness from this alone from the communication of God to us. Whensoever the gospel takes hold of your hearts, it will undoubtedly frame them to this, to a measuring of all blessedness from God alone. And this will carry the heart to an undervaluing of all other things, as being too low, and unworthy for this end; and so to a forsaking of every thing for the closer enjoyment of God. I fear many believers are little acquainted with this joy, because they draw not their joy singly out of the pure fountain of delight, but turn aside to other external comforts, and drown their souls in them. Now, indeed, these two cannot well consist together. If we take in any thing else to make up our happiness and comfort, so much we lose of God, and that which is truly spiritual, and therefore our hearts would be more purified from carnal

delights ; if we would have experience of this joy, we must hang only upon his countenance and company, else we lose the sweetness of it.

Now the apostle prosecutes this further, to discover what conformity must be between them that should keep this fellowship ; and what likeness of nature and qualities is necessary for them who would be happy in God's society. "This is the message we have heard," saith he, "and which we declare unto you, that God is light," &c. Take this jointly with that which went before ; "this we declare, that ye may have fellowship with the Father and the Son." And to the end this fellowship may hold and yield you fulness of joy, it is necessary that the nature of God be laid down as the pattern to which ye must be conformed,—“God is light ;” and therefore you must be light too, if ye would have fellowship with that pure light. Now this, I say, is the full message of the gospel, that which was sent down from heaven with the Son of God, the messenger of the covenant, and which the apostles heard from him. Indeed, the very manner of the proposal of these things stirs up our hearts to attention, and makes us more serious than commonly we are. That there is one, and such an one sent from heaven, with such an embassy as this is, to invite us to society with God again ; one whose interest lies in this to make us happy ; and this he declares unto us, that he hath no other design but to fulfil our joy. O how powerful might this be on our hearts, to conquer them, to make them willingly hearken to him ! Any message that comes from heaven should be received with great reverence and respect of mortal men ; because it comes from the court and palace of the great king. But when this is the substance of it, to make us happy in himself, to advance us to this incomparable dignity of society with himself, in which society there is a fulness of joy, then how should we receive it with open hearts, and entertain it gladly ! If we could take it always thus as a messenger from heaven, and look upon it, and hear it in that notion, I think the

fruit would be incomparably greater ; for what is it that makes it dead and ineffectual in men's hearts, but that the apprehension of it degenerates and falls down from God to creatures ; because it is not taken so as his word, carrying the stamp of his divine authority ? We bring it forth, not as a message from him, but as from ourselves ; and you receive it not as from him, but from us ; and thus it is adulterated and corrupted on both hands. My beloved, let us jointly mind this, that whatsoever we have to declare is a message from God to mortal men ; and therefore let us so compose ourselves in his sight, as if he were speaking to us. The conscience of a very heathen was awaked, when Ehud told him he had a message from God to him, "Eglon arose out of his seat," that he might hear it reverently, Judg. iii. 20, though it was a bloody message, as it proved in the event. Yet so much the common dictates of reason might teach you, that ye should arise and compose yourselves to reverend and awful attention to what the Lord God will speak. But when, moreover, we know that the sum of the message is to make us blessed, and raise us up to communion with him in his joy and happiness, we are not only called to reverence, as to God, but to ardent affection and desire, as to him who by all means seeks our happiness. O how happy were he that could first hear and receive this message from him, and then declare it to others ! But, however, though we should fail in that, this doth not change either the authority or nature of the message itself ; and therefore, if men should be so far destitute of God, as not to bring it from him immediately, yet do not you forsake your own mercy too ; but receive it as that which is come forth from God ; receive it for itself, as carrying in its bosom a fulness of joy to you ; and receive it for his sake who moved this embassage first after sinners, and his sake who carried it to sinners, that is. for the Father and Son, to whose fellowship you are here invited. Let us then hear the message.

"This then is the message, that God is light," &c.

The ground of communion of persons is, their union in nature, or likeness one to another. There is some general society between all mankind, as being conjoined in one common nature; but the contracting of that in narrower bounds of affinity and consanguinity, doth enlarge the affection the more. You see it is natural for those who are joined by such relations of blood one to another, to love one another more than others out of these bonds. But true friendship draws the circle yet narrower, and contracts the love that is scattered abroad to mankind in a strange channel, to run towards one, or a few; and the foundation of this is some peculiar and particular similitude, and likeness in manners, and sympathy of disposition, which makes the souls of men to melt one into another, after some converse and acquaintance together. This is the bond that knits this near society; some conformity necessarily presupposed to communion and fellowship. Now, that which holds so in the communion of man with man, must be much more needful in man's communion with God: for all the societies, combinations, and conjunctions of the creatures, are but shadows of this higher communication of the spirit of man with God the Father of spirits. And, indeed we may find some rude draughts and resemblances of this divine society, and of the rule according to which it must be modelled, in all the friendly or near conjunctions of creatures; for every thing is best preserved, and agreeth best with things of its own nature. See the disposition of the parts of the world; things contiguous and nearest other are also likeliest in nature one to another. So it is among men; the several agreements and symbolizings of men's spirits in different qualities and tempers, make several sorts of men, and part them into so many companies: *Pares paribus congregantur, simile simili gaudet.*

Now, my beloved, this same supernatural and divine society that we speak of, must be constituted according to this fundamental rule, that is, it is necessary, to the end that God and man may have fellowship together, that



they come nearer in likeness one to another. Now for God, you know he cannot be liker us, for he is unchangeably holy and good. That were most absurd to bring down his majesty to partake of our wretched infirmities of sin and darkness. Indeed in this he hath come as far as his own nature and our good would permit, to communicate in our nature, and all the sinless infirmities of it. It is impossible then, that he should make up the distance by any change in himself; but we must be changed, and some way raised up to partake of the purity of his nature, and be transformed into some likeness to him, and then is the foundation of society and fellowship laid down. This is the apostle's meaning, in declaring to us what God is, that according to that pattern, and in that glass we may see what to conform ourselves to, and may have a particular determination of the great qualification of those who pretend to have fellowship with God. "God is light, and in him is no darkness." Now take the just opposition, —man is darkness, and in him is no light. Now, what communion then can light have with darkness? Either the light must become darkness, or the darkness become light; either the light must leave its glorious purity, and forsake its nature, which cannot be admitted, or else the darkness of men's souls must be wiped off, and abolished by the brightness of God's light; and then there may be a communion between the primitive light and the derivative light, between the original light and that which flows out from the original. But take darkness remaining darkness, and light remaining light, and they cannot compone together; for the first great separation that was made in the world, was between light and darkness: "And God saw the light that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness," Gen. i. 4. And so it is impossible for men that live in the darkness of their minds, in ignorance, and in the darkness of sinful lusts, that they can have any fellowship with God, who is a fountain of pure light, and undefiled sanctity. "What hast thou to do to take my covenant in thy mouth," &c.; and this God

saith to the wicked. It is an incongruous and unsuitable thing, for man to pretend nearness and interest in this God, and yet be buried in darkness and hatred of the light of personal reformation, as a gold ring in a swine's nose, that rather deforms the jewel than beautifies the beast: so are the pretensions of ignorant and wicked men to this divine society. &c.

## X.

1 John i. 5.—This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, &c.

WHO is a fit messenger to declare this message? Can darkness comprehend the light, or apprehend it? Or can those that are blind form any lively notion of light, to the instruction and persuasion of others? Truly, no more can we conceive or speak of God, who is that pure light, than a blind man can discourse on colours, or a deaf man on sounds. Who is blind as the Lord's servant? and therefore, who are more unmeet to declare this message of light? What reverence and godly fear ought this to be declared withal, when mortal man speaks of the eternal God unto men? What composure of spirit should be in us? What trembling and adoration? For, at our best, we can but declare our own ignorance; and the furthest attainment in this knowledge is but a further discovery of man's darkness. We have three ways of creeping towards that glorious light of God. First, his own works are like some visible appearances of that invisible and incomprehensible God; and in these we know him, but not what he is in himself. Consider how dark and dull we are in piercing into the hidden natures of things, even below us, as beasts and plants. We behold some effects flow from them, but from what principle these do flow, that we know not: how much less can we apprehend anything suitable of the divine majesty, that is in-

finitely above us, from these wonderful and glorious works of his power and wisdom? Man is endowed with wisdom to do some excellent works of art, as planting, grassing, building, painting, weaving, and such like. But the beasts that are below us cannot apprehend from these works what the nature of man is. Now is there not a more infinite distance, a greater disproportion between us and the divine nature, so that we cannot rise up to an understanding notion of it, in itself? Nay, besides, one man will do many things which another cannot understand,—he beholds the art of it, he sees the matter, but yet he cannot pierce into the mind of the workman, and look upon that wisdom and idea of his mind. Therefore all that we can conclude from these wonderful works of God, is some silent admiration of him. If these be such, then what must he be? How infinitely distant from them, and transcendent over them? But what he is, these cannot declare, and we cannot apprehend. Then we use to climb up to the knowledge of God, by attributing to him all the perfections, excellencies, and eminencies of the creatures. Whatsoever commends them, we apprehend that originally and infinitely in him; and thus we spell out that name that is most simply one, in many letters and characters, according to our mean capacity, as children when they begin to learn. So we ascribe to him wisdom, goodness, power, justice, holiness, mercy, truth, &c. All which names being taken from the creatures, and so having significations suited to our imperfections, they must needs come infinitely short of him, and so our apprehensions of them. These are scattered among the creatures, therefore they cause divers conceptions in us; but all these are united in him. He is a most simple, pure Being, that eminently and virtually is all things; and properly is none of all.

Another way we have of apprehending him, by way of negation, denying all the imperfections of the creatures, and removing them at an infinite distance from him; and truly, though this be an imperfection in knowledge, yet it

is the greatest knowledge we can attain to, to know rather what he is not, than what he is. He is not limited to any place, nor bounded with any measures and degrees of perfection, as creatures are; therefore we call him infinite: he is not comprehended within the limits of time, but comprehends all within himself; therefore he is eternal: he is not subject to changes and alterations; therefore called immutable: he is not compounded, as a result of divers parts; therefore he is most purely simple, and one: he is not like those things we see and hear, that fall under our senses; therefore we call him a Spirit, or a spiritual Being. Now, in all these weak endeavours of man, to detain and fix his own spirit in the contemplation of God, if he cannot reach the understanding of what God is, yet certainly he will attain this great point of wisdom,—not to be ignorant of his own ignorance. And truly, my beloved, this is the thing I would have us to learn to know, that the admiration of God in silence is the best expression of him. We would not search into these mysteries, to satisfy our curiosity, but rather compose our hearts to a continual silent wondering before him; for where our understandings are confounded, and our minds overwhelmed with the infiniteness of that glory, so that we can see nothing but our ignorance of all, this should certainly compose all to quiet admiration, for silence and wonder is the proper and natural posture of a soul that is at a stand, and can neither win [*i. e.* get] forward for inaccessible light, nor will retire backward, for that it apprehends already.

“This then is the message, that God is light;” because we cannot conceive in our poor narrow minds what God is in himself, therefore he expresseth to us often in similitudes to the creatures, and condescends to our capacity. As he stands in manifold relations to us, so he takes the most familiar names, that may hold out to our dull senses what we may expect of him. Therefore he calls himself a Father, a King, a Husband, a Rock, a Buckler, and strong Tower, a Mountain, and whatsoever else they may

represent to our hearts, that which may strengthen them in believing. But there is no creature so directly attributed to God, as light: none used to express his very nature and being, as abstracted from these relations, but this—‘ God is light ;’ and Christ takes it to himself—“ the light of the world,” and “ the life of men.” The truth is, it hath some excellency in it above all other visible creatures, that it may fitly carry some resemblance to him. The scripture calls “ light his garment,” Psal. civ. 2. And truly it is a more glorious robe of majesty than all the royal and imperial robes and garments of state that either angels or men could contrive. The light is, as it were, a visible appearance of the invisible God. He hath covered his invisible nature with this glorious garment, to make himself in a manner visible to man. It is true, that light is but, as it were, a shadow of that inaccessible light, *umbra Dei*. It is the dark shadow of God, who is himself infinitely more beautiful and glorious. But yet, as to us, it hath greater glory and majesty in it, than any creature besides. It is the chief of the works of God, without which the world would be without form, and void. It is the very beauty of the creation, that which gives lustre and amiableness to all that is in it, without which the pleasantest paradise would become a wilderness, and this beautiful structure, and adorned palace of the world, a loathsome dungeon. Besides the admirable beauty of it, it hath a wonderful swift conveyance, throughout the whole world, the upper and lower, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. It is carried from the one end of heaven to the other in a moment, “ and who can say by what way the light is parted ?” Job xxxviii. 24. Moreover, it carries alongst with it a beautiful influence, and a refreshing heat and warmth, which is the very life and subsistence of all the creatures below. And so, as there is nothing so beautiful, so nothing so universally and highly profitable. And to all this, add that singular property of it, that it is not capable of infection ; it is of such absolute purity, that it can communicate itself to the

dunghill, as well as to the garden, without receiving any mixture from it. In all the impurities it meets withal, it remains unmixed and untainted, and preserves its own nature entire. Now you may perceive, that there is nothing visible that is fitter to resemble the invisible God, than this glorious, beautiful, pure, and universally communicable creature, light.

Hereby you may have shadowed out unto you the nature of God, that he is an all-knowing, intelligent Being. As light is the first and principal visible thing, yea, that which gives visibility to all things, and so is in its own nature a manifestation of all things material and bodily; so God is the first object of the understanding—*primum intelligibile, et primum intelligens*. Nothing so fit an emblem of knowledge as light, and truly in that respect God is the original light, a pure intellectual light, that hath in himself the perfect idea and comprehension of all things. He hath anticipated in himself the knowledge of all, because all things were formed in his infinite understanding, and lay, as it were, first hid in the bowels of his infinite power. Therefore he is a globe or mass of light and knowledge, like the sun, from whom nothing is hid: “Hell and destruction are not covered to him.” There is no opacity, no darkness or thickness in the creation, that can terminate or bound this light, or hinder his understanding to pierce into it. Now as all things, by the irradiation of the light, become visible, so the participation of this glorious Sun of Righteousness, and the shining of his beams into the souls of men, makes them to partake of that heavenly intellectual nature, and reflects a wonderful beauty upon them, which is not in the rest of the world.

Besides, here is represented to us the absolute purity and perfection of God’s nature,—“God is light, and in him is no darkness.” Besides the purity of the light of knowledge, there is a purity of the beauty of holiness,—the glorious light of God’s virtue, and power, and wisdom, is communicated to all the creatures. There is an universal

extent of his influence towards the good and bad, as the sun shines on both, and yet there is no spot or stain upon his holiness or righteousness, from all his intermingling with the creatures, the worst and basest creatures. All his works are holy and righteous, even his works in unholy and unrighteous men. He draws no defilement from the basest of the creatures, nor yet from the sinfulness of it. He can be intimately present and conjoined in working, in virtue and power, in care and providence, with the dirt and mire of the streets, with the beasts of the field, and yet that is no stain upon his honour or credit, as men would suppose it be, no more than it is a dishonour to the sun to shine on the dunghill. In a word, there is no mixture of ignorance, darkness, impurity, or iniquity in him, not the least shadow of change or turning, not the least seed of imperfection ;—in regard of him the moon is not clean, and the sun is spotted ; in respect of his holiness, angels may be charged with folly.

Then add unto this, to make up the resemblance fuller, the bounty and benignity of his influence upon the world, the flowings forth of his infinite goodness, that enrich the whole earth. Look as the sun is the greatest and most universal benefactor,—his influence and heat is the very renovation of the world ; it makes all new, and green, and flourishing ; it puts a youth upon the world, and so is the very spring and fountain of life to all sublunary things. How much is that true of the true light, of the substantial, of whom this sun is but a shadow. He is “the life of the world, and the light of men. Every good gift, and every perfect donation descends from him,” James i. 17. His influence is more universal to the being, to the moving, to the living of all things. And then Jesus Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, is carried about in the orb of the gospel, and in his beams there is a healing virtue. These are the refreshments of poor wearied souls, that are scorched with the anger of God. There is an admirable heat and warmth of love and affection that this glorious light carries embosomed in it, and that is it that pierces

into souls, and warms hearts, and quickens dead spirits, and puts a new face upon all again. This is the spring of all the life that is truly spiritual, and it hath as sweet and comfortable effects upon the souls of men, who receive the truth in love, the light in love, that is, the light with heat, as ever the sun approaching near the earth hath had upon plants and living creatures.

And to complete the resemblance more, there may be something of the infallibility and incomprehensibility of the divine majesty here represented. For though nothing be clearer than the light, yet there is nothing in its own nature darker than light: that which is so manifest to the eyes, how obscure is it to the understanding. Many debates and inquiries have been about it, but yet it is not known what that is, by which we know all things. Certainly, such is the divine light. It is inconceivable and inexpressible, therefore is he said "to dwell in light inaccessible, and full of glory," 1 Tim. vi. 16. There is a twofold darkness that hinders us to see God, a darkness of ignorance in us, and a darkness of inaccessible light in him. The one is a veil upon our hearts, which blinds and darkens the souls of men, that they do not see that which is manifest of God, even in his works. O that cloud of unbelief that is spread over our souls, which hinders the glorious rays of that divine light to shine into them! This darkness Satan contributes much to, who is the prince of darkness, 2 Cor. iv. 4. This makes the most part of souls like dungeons within, when the glorious light of the gospel surrounds them without. This earthliness and carnality of our hearts makes them, like the earth, receive only the light in the upper and outward superface, and not suffer it to be transmitted into our hearts to change them. But when it pleaseth him, who at the first, by a word of power, "commanded light to shine out of darkness." he can scatter that cloud of ignorance, and draw away the veil of unbelief, and can by his power and art, so transform the soul, as to remove its earthly quality, and make it transparent and pure, and



then the light will shine into the heart, and get free access into the soul. But though this darkness were wholly removed, there is another darkness, that ariseth not from the want of light, but from the excessive super-abundance of light—*caligo lucis nimix*; that is, a divine darkness, a darkness of glory, such an infinite excess and superplus of light and glory, above all created capacities, that it dazzles and confounds all mortal or created understandings. We see some shadows of this, if we look up to the clear sun. We are able to see nothing for too much light. There is such an infinite disproportion here between the eye of our mind, and this divine light of glory, that if we curiously pry into it, it is rather confounding and astonishing; and therefore it fills the souls of saints with continual silent admiration and adoration.

## XI.

1 John i. 4.—This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

TRUE religion consists not only in the knowledge of God, but especially in conformity to him, and communion with him. Communion and fellowship with God is the great end and design of the gospel, and it is the great result of all a Christian's pains and progress. It is not only the greatest part of religion, but the very reward of religion too, for piety hath its reward of happiness in the bosom of it, without borrowing from external things. Now, that which this sweet and fragrant fruit, which perfumes all the soul with delight, and fills it with joy, springs out of, is conformity to God. Assimilation of nature and disposition, some likeness to God imprinted on the soul again in holy affections and dispositions, a coincidency of our will with the will of God, drowning of it in the sea of his good pleasure, his law in the inward parts. Now what is the root of this conformity, but the

knowledge of God? This is that which hath a virtue to transform the soul into his similitude. You see then where true religion begins lowest, and by what means it grows up to the sweet fruit of that eternal joy that shall be pressed out of the grapes of fellowship with God. So then, whatsoever is declared of God unto us in his word, whatsoever is holden forth of him, is not only set forth to be the subject of our knowledge, but especially to be a pattern for imitation, and to be an inflaming motive to our affection. This is the very substance of the verse.

“This then is the message I declare, that God is light;” and this I heard not from Christ only, for the satisfaction of my curiosity, nor do I declare it to you only, that you may know it, as if you had no more to do with it, but especially that ye may know in what ye ought to be in conformity to that light. The end of your knowing God, is to become liker God, if so be ye would have communion with him.

Let us take this rule, then, to measure all our searchings after God, and inquirings into him. Certainly there ought to be more meditation and inquiry of heart upon this subject, because it is the spring of all life to the soul. It is that which enricheth it most, and fills it with peace, joy, and delight, and brings in a treasure into a man’s heart, such as Christ speaks of—“a good man out of the good treasure of his heart,” &c. Meditation, much meditation on God, a stayedness and fixedness of spirit upon him, lays up a treasure in the heart. This is it that makes such a difference between the heart and mouth of a righteous man, and a wicked man. The heart of the wicked is little worth, for the total want of this; and therefore, their lips and tongues are void of edification, full of corruption. But where this spring floweth within, it maketh the mouth of a man like a well of life; it maketh his lips like choice silver. O the scantiness and neglect of this amongst Christians, makes all to wither and decay! There is little searching after the Almighty, little employing and entertaining our spirits about him; low,

slender, and single thoughts and apprehensions of him, which cannot but cause a *deliquium* and decay in all the parts of Christianity, when the very sun is eclipsed from us by our ignorance and inconsideration of him: and that so long, it must have dreadful effects upon us. Therefore, let us be exhorted to this study, to give our spirits to this employment,—to think more on God. But, as I was saying, there is need of a rule to measure us in it, and of some caution about it, that is, that we have our end rightly established, what we aim at in inquiring after, or meditating upon God. If it be only to give entertainment to the curiosity of our minds, as in the contemplation of natural things; if it be only to pry into secrets and mysteries, and to labour to comprehend that which is incomprehensible, then we lose our labour, and we are in danger to meet with a consuming fire, instead of instructing and refreshing light. I would therefore have this guarded against,—the insatiable desire and greediness of our minds after the knowledge of secret mysteries. We may set bounds here, and not overstretch or strain our understandings, to compass his infinite Being, as it is in itself. Let us rather take him up as he is revealed in the scriptures, and so meditate on him as manifested in his word and works, his grace, mercy, power, wisdom, &c. and read his name with delight in those large volumes spread before our eyes, &c.

Now, the just measuring and regulating of all knowledge of God, is to direct it to a further end, to have nothing before us but this, that we may reverence, adore, fear, and love him so much the more. And this is the thing that maketh access to him most easy and sweet, when the design a soul hath, in all its searchings about him, is for this purpose, to the end it may love him, and worship him more suitably, and be more conformed to him, when he is looked upon as a pattern of our conformity, that is, the right apprehension and uptaking of him, to know that God is light, and so to know it, as in it to behold the necessity of what qualification should be in us;

that is indeed to know God. My beloved, let us consider that so much we know of God, as we love him, and fear him, and are conformed unto him ; for that knowledge, which is not about this work and design, is no other purpose, but to be a witness against a man, and the most heinous aggravation of his sins.

To come then to the particular in hand, " God is light ;" and that is holden out and declared for this end, that there may be a pattern of the qualification of all that intend to enter into that society ; if ye would have fellowship with God, then consider what you engage into, what manner of person he is, for the intimate knowledge of one another is presupposed to all constant friendship. You must know then what God is, if ye would have communion with him, because there is no communion without some conformity, and no conformity without knowledge of him. Therefore, as he is light, so the soul must be made light in him, and enlightened by him, that would have his society. We must be transformed into that nature, and made children of light, who were children of darkness. Now, as there is a light of understanding and wisdom in God, and a light of holiness and purity, so there is in our souls, opposite to these, a darkness of ignorance and unbelief, and a darkness of sin, and impurity of affections. Now, what communion can light have with darkness ? Let every man ask this at his own heart, If there be no happiness without this society, and no possibility of this society, while I remain in darkness ; then is it not high time to come to the light ? This, then, is the first change that is made in a soul, the darkness of ignorance and unbelief is driven out, by the approach of that glorious light of the gospel into the heart. Then is discovered unto the soul that deformity of sin, that loathsomeness in itself, that it never apprehended. Then there is a manifestation of the hidden works of darkness, of the desperate wickedness of the heart, which lay unobserved and unsuspected all the while. And now a man cannot in that view but abhor

himself for that which none else can see in him. And there is withal manifested that glorious holiness and purity in God, that inviolable righteousness, that omnipotent power, which formerly were never seriously thought upon. Now these are represented to the life before a sinner. And to close up all, there is a manifestation of the grace and goodness of God in Christ, which discovers a way of salvation, and delivery from sin and wrath; and this perfumeth and refresheth all the faculties of the soul. Thus the soul is in a part conformed to that original light, when a beam is sent from it, and hath pierced into the heart, and scattered the darkness that did alienate the minds of men from God. But it is not only an illumination of the foreface and outer side of the soul, not only a conviction of the judgment in these things; but by virtue of that divine heat that is transmitted with the light of the gospel, the soul is purified and cleansed from its grosser nature, and so is made transparent, that the light may shine into the very inwards of the heart. And this is the special point of conformity to God,—to have our souls purged from the darkness of sinful, earthly, and muddy affections, —to have them purified by the light of God, from all the works and lusts of darkness, and the shining beauty of holy affections and inclinations, to succeed and fill up the vacant room. If knowledge only reside in our brains, and send not down warm beams to quicken and inflame the heart, then it is barren and unfruitful, it is cold and unprofitable. If it hover only alone in our heads, and keep a motion there, but send down no refreshing showers to the affections, which may make us abound in good fruits, then it is like the windy clouds, clouds without rain, that pass away without any benefit to the thirsty ground. Let us then take this along with us, let the impression of this description of the divine majesty abide in our hearts: “God is light;” and if we often ruminate and ponder on this, I think it will make us often to reflect upon ourselves, how we are darkness; and this will breed some carefulness and desire in the soul, how to have

this darkness removed, that there may be a soul capable of divine illustration. This is it that advanceth the soul to the nearest conformity with God,—the looking often upon God, till our souls be enlightened, and our hearts purified; and this again puts the soul in the nearest capacity for that blessed communion with God: “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God,” Matt. v. 8. Truly it is not profoundness of engeny, [*i e.* genius] it is not acuteness and sharpness of wit, it is not pregnancy in understanding, or eminency in parts, that will dispose the soul to this blessed vision of God, and frame it to a capacity of fellowship with him. No, there needs no extraordinary parts for this, nothing but that the heart be purified from corruptions, those inward earthly qualities, that are like so many vicious and gross humours, filling the organs of the sight; these, pride, conceit, self-love, passion, anger, malice, envy, strife, covetousness, love of pleasures, ambition; these, I say, that possess the hearts of the most excellent natural spirits, cast a mist upon their eyes, and hinder them to see God, or enjoy that delight in him, that some poor, weak, and ignorant creatures, whose hearts the Lord had purged from sin, do find in God. Therefore if any of you have an aim at this, to have fellowship with God, know both for your direction and your encouragement, that “God is light.” For your direction, because that must be your pattern, and if you have no study that way to be like him in holiness, you shall not see him. But take it likewise for an encouragement, for that stile carries not only the necessity of what he must be, but it holds out likewise the fountain and store-house of all our qualifications; for God is light, the original, primitive light,—all must borrow of him, and that light is freely and impartially communicable to poor sinners: “with thee is the fountain of life, and in thy light shall we see light.” Let a soul that apprehends its own darkness and distance from him thus encourage itself: My light is but a beam derived from his light, and there is no want in him. He is a sun of righteousness. If I shut not up my heart through unwilling-

ness and unbelief; if I desire not to keep my sins, the would be purged from them, then that glorious light may shine without stop and impediment into my heart. He is not only light in his own nature, but he is a light to us, and if he please to remove that which is interposed between him and us, it shall be day-light in our hearts again. Thus a soul may strengthen itself to wait on him, and by looking thus up to him, and fixing on him, we shall be enlightened, and our faces not be ashamed.

## XII.

1 John i. 6.—If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, &c.

THERE is nothing in which men suffer themselves to be so easily deceived as in this highest concernment of religion, in which the eternal interest of their souls lies. There is no delusion either so gross or so universal in any other thing, as in this thing, in regard of which all other things are nothing. This hath overspread the world, (to speak only of that part which pretends to Christianity,) a strong, pertinacious, and blind fancy of being in Jesus Christ and having interest in salvation. I call it a blind and ignorant fancy, for truly ignorance and darkness is the strongest foundation of such conceits. Papists call it the mother of devotion. It is true, in this sense it is the mother of a man's groundless devotion towards himself, that is, of delusion. This, together with self-love, which always hoodwinks the mind, and will not suffer a serious impartial examination of a man's self; these, I say, are the bottom of this vain persuasion, that possesseth the generality of men. Now, what it wants of knowledge, it hath of wilfulness. It is a conceit altogether void of reason, but it is so wilful and pertinacious, that it is almost utterly invincible, and so it puts souls in the most desperate forlorn estate that can be imagined. It makes

them, as the apostle speaks, Ephes. v. 6. *υἱοὺς τῆς ἀπειθείας*, children of impersuasion;—it is rendered commonly, “children of disobedience.” And, indeed, they are joined together. They are children of disobedience, carrying the manifest characters of wrath upon them; yet they are withal children of impersuasion, incapable of any persuasion contrary to these deluding insinuations of their own minds. Though they be manifest to all men to be sons of disobedience, living in rebellion against God, yet it is not possible to persuade them of it. They are as far from conviction of what they are, as reformation to what they should be. Notwithstanding, if men would but give an impartial and attentive ear to what the apostle says here, I suppose the very frame of his argument is so convincing, that he could not but leave some impression. If any thing will convince a child of impersuasion, the terms here propounded are fittest, “God is light, and in him is no darkness.” Hence it follows, by unavoidable consequence, as clear as the light, that no man can have fellowship with God that walks in darkness.

Those that delude themselves in this matter are of two kinds. The generality pretend to Christianity in general, and to an interest in salvation, but if we descend into the chief parts and members of Christianity, as holiness, fellowship with God, walking after the Spirit, and such like, these they do not so much as pretend to. And withal, they think they have a dispensation from such strictness, and make it a sufficient plea that they are not such, because they never professed to be such. Others again, though fewer, can pretend even to these higher points of Christianity, as communion with God, walking after the Spirit, and indeed in this they are more consonant to their profession of Christianity. But as the apostle saith, there may be a practical lie in it too, if we consider and compare their practice with their profession.

I would speak a word, by way of preparation, to you who are of the first sort, that is, the very multitude of professing Christians, who, because you do not profess so



much as others, and do not give out yourselves for the students of holiness, think yourselves exempted from the stroke of all this soul-piercing doctrine. You think readily it is not pertinent to apply this to you, of walking contrary to your profession, and so committing this gross lie in not doing the truth. "If any man say I have fellowship with God," &c. And who will say that, say ye? Who will speak such a high word of himself as this? Therefore, since you do not presume so high, you think you have escaped the censure that follows.

But I beseech you, consider what your professions import, and what you engage yourselves to, even by the general profession of Christianity. I know you will all say you are Christians, and hope to be saved. Now, do ye understand what is included in that? If any man say that he is a Christian, he really says that he hath fellowship with God; if any man say he is a Christian, he says he hath fellowship with Christ and is partaker of his Spirit; for, as the apostle, Rom. viii. 9, declares unto you, "If any have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his;" that is, he is no Christian. For what is it, I pray you, to be a Christian? Is it not to be a new creature, formed again by the Spirit of Christ? 2 Cor. v. 17. Therefore, in as far as you pretend to be Christians, and yet are not professors of holiness, and think you have a dispensation from such a walking in God and after Christ, you fall under a twofold contradiction, and commit a twofold lie: first, between your profession and practice; then in your profession itself,—your practice is directly cross to the very general profession of Christianity. But besides that, there is a contradiction in the bosom of your profession; you affirm you are Christians, and yet refuse the profession of holiness; you say ye hope for heaven, and yet do not so much as pretend to godliness and walking spiritually. Nay, these you disjoin in your profession, which are really one. without which the name of Christianity is an empty, vain, and ridiculous appellation. There must be then a great darkness of misapprehension in your

minds, that you take on the name of Christians, and will not know what it imports ; and therefore in the meantime, you profess that which destroys and annuls your former profession. Now, certainly, this is a grosser lie, a flatter contradiction, than it needs much inquiry into, to find it out. It is so palpable, that I wonder that these very common and received principles of truth do not rise up within to testify against it ; for if ye do not own the profession of holiness and communion with God, what advantage have you then of Christianity ? Tell me, what will it serve you for ? Can it save you ? Can a bare, empty, contradicted, and blasphemed title save you ? And if it do not save you, it will make your condemnation the greater. Let this then first be settled in our hearts, and laid down as a principle,—that the most general profession of Christianity lays an inviolable bond and obligation upon us, to all that is imported in the particular expressions of a Christian's nature, walk, and society. Whether we take it so or not, thus it is : to be a Christian infolds all that can be said ; and if it do not import these, it is not true to its own signification nor conformed to Christ's meaning. You may deprave the world as you please, and deform that holy calling so, as it may suit to your carriage, but according to this word, in this acceptance of it, you shall be judged ; and if your judge shall in that great day lay all this great charge upon you, what will it avail you now to absolve yourselves in your imaginations, even from the very obligation itself ?

Let us suppose, then, that you are convicted of this, that Christianity, in the most general and common acceptance, is inclusive of fellowship and communion with God, and that you profess and pretend to both ; then let us apply this just rule of the apostle's, to examine the truth and reality of such a profession. The rule is straight, and so may be a trial both of that which is straight and crooked: *Rectum sui et obliqui index*. And here the application being made, there is a discovery of the falsehood and crookedness of most men's hearts. This golden rule of exami-

nation is a rule of proportion, so to speak, or it is founded upon the harmony that should be between profession and practice, words and deeds; and upon that conformity should intercede between those that have communion one with another. Now apply these to the generality of Christians, and behold there is no harmony and consent between their speaking and walking. Their calling and profession, as Christians, imports communion with God, who is the pure unmixed light, and yet they declare otherwise, that themselves are in darkness of ignorance, and walk in the darkness of sin, and so that communion must be pretended, where there is no conformity and likeness to God intended. The result then of all is this; herein is the greatest lie, and most dangerous withal, committed,—it is the greatest lie, because it takes in all a man's conversation, which all alone makes up one universal lie, a lie composed of infinite contrarieties, of innumerable particular lies; for every step, every word, and action, is in its own nature contrary to that holy profession, but all combined together, makes up a black constellation of lies—one powerful lie against the truth. And, besides, it is not against a particular truth, but against the whole complex of Christianity. And error is a lie against such a particular truth as it opposeth; but the tract and course of an ignorant ungodly conversation is one continued lie against the whole bulk and body of Christianity. It is a lie drawn the length of many weeks, months, and years, against the whole frame of Christian profession: for there is nothing in the calling of a Christian, that is not retracted, contradicted, and reproached by it. Oh! that ye could unbowel your own ways, and see what a cluster of lies and incongruities is in them; what reproaches and calumnies these practical lies cast upon the honour of your Christian calling; how they tend of their own nature, to the disgracing of the truth, and the blaspheming of God's name! These things ye would find, if ye would rip up your own hearts and ways; and if you found how great that lie is, you could not but fear the danger of it: for it being no less than a denying of Jesus

Christ, and a real ab-renunciation of him, it puts you without the refuge of sinners, and is most likely to keep you without the blessed city, for "there shall in no ways enter therein anything that defileth, or maketh a lie," Rev. xxi. 27. What shall then become of them whose life all along is but one continued lie?

### XIII.

1 John i. 6.—If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, &c.

THAT which is the sum of religion, sincerity, and a correspondency between profession and practice, is confirmed by reason, and much strengthened by nature itself; so that religion, reason, and nature, conspire in one, to hold out the beauty and comeliness of sincerity, and to put a note and character of infamy and deformity upon all hypocrisy and deceit, especially in the matters of religion. There is nothing so contrary to religion. There is nothing so contrary to religion, as a false appearance, a shew of that which is not: for religion is a most entire and equable thing, like itself, harmonious in all parts of it, the same within and without, in expression and action, all correspondent together. Now, to mar this harmony, and to make it up of unequal, dissimilar parts, and to make one part give the lie to the other, the course of a man's life, in ignorance, negligence, and sin, proclaiming contrary to the profession of Christianity: this is to make religion a monstrous thing, to deny the nature of it, and in our imaginations to contrive an impossible union of inconsistent things. It is a creature made up of contradictions, which can have no subsistence in the truth, but only in the fancies of deluded souls; one professing Christianity, and so by consequence fellowship with the original light, the Sun of Righteousness, and yet darkness of ignorance possessing the mind, and the heart carried away in

the ways of the lusts of ignorance, and walking in that darkness. This is a monster in Christianity, one so far misshapen, that the very outward form and visage of it doth not remain. But I told you, reason confirms this; for what more suitable to the very natural frame and constitution of a reasonable being, than that the outward man should be the image and expression of the inward, and that they should answer one another, as face answers face in the water; that the tongue should be the interpreter of the mind, and the actions of a man's life the interpreter of his tongue? Here is that beautiful proportion, and that pleasing harmony, when all these, though different in their own nature, yet conjoin together, and make up one sweet concord. Now truly, if we take upon us the profession of Christianity, and yet our ordinary and habitual speeches are carnal and earthly, never salted with grace, often poisoned with blasphemies, oaths, and cursings, and often defiled with filthy speeches, and often intermingled with reproaches of others; if our conversation be conformed to the course of the world, according to those lusts that hurry away multitudes of mankind to perdition, and look to the heart within, and behold never any labour about the purifying of it from corruption, never any mortification of evil affections, and little or no knowledge of the truth, not so much as may let Christ into the soul: this, I say, is as unreasonable and absurd, as it is irreligious. It wholly perverts that beautiful order, makes an irreconcilable discord between all the parts in man, that neither mind, nor mouth, nor hands, answer one another, nor all of them, nor any of them answer that holy calling a man pretends to. Such a one pretends ordinarily the goodness of his heart towards God, but now the tongue cannot interpret the heart. It is exauctorated out of that natural office, for the ordinary current is contrary to that pretended goodness of the heart; "for a good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, sendeth forth good things," but all there are either evil, or never seasoned with that spiritual goodness. Then the ways and actions of a man's life which

ought to interpret and expound his professions, these are rendered altogether incapable of that. They give no confirmation to them, but rather a manifest contradiction; for what are your multiplied oaths, drunkennesses, fornications railings, contentions, lyings, sabbath-profanations? Your woful neglect of prayer in secret, and in your families, your continuing in these evils that ever you walked into? what are they, but a manifest violation of both religion and reason, and a clear confirmation that “ye are liars, and the truth is not in you?”

There is something even in nature to declare the absurdity and unnaturalness of this general discordance between men's profession and practice. Look upon all the creatures, and do they not all with one voice proclaim sincerity? Hath not every beast and every bird its own outward shape, outward gesture, and voice, and external workings, which declare the inward nature of it? And is not this a staple-known rule in nature, that every thing is known by the effects of it? A lion by his roaring, a lark by its singing, a horse by his neighing, and an ox by his lowing, &c. All these speak forth nothing but sincerity, in so much, that if these marks and signs should be confounded, and beasts use them indifferently, all human knowledge should suddenly fall to nothing, this would put such a confusion both in the world and mankind. O how doth this condemn those who pretend to this high calling of Christianity! and yet there is no way left to discern them by, nothing appearing in them, and ordinarily proceeding from them, which may give a signification of the inward truth of their fellowship with God; but rather that which gives a demonstration of the vanity of the pretension. There were no consent in nature, if that were not, neither is there any harmonious agreement in religion, where this proportion and correspondence is not kept in a man's life. The very heathens did not account them philosophers, but those that expressed their doctrines in works, as well as words; and truly, the liveliest image of truth is in practice. They commended

them that were sparing in words, and abundant in deeds ; who had short speeches, but long and large discourses in their life ; and what is this, but that which our Saviour every where, from his own example, inculcates upon us ? These words are emphatic, “ To do the truth, to walk in the light, to do his words, to believe with the heart,” and such like : all which declare, that in so far we have the truth, and have fellowship with the Light, as it is impressed in the affection, and expressed again in the conversation ; for the infinite truth and the infinite life is one, and the original Light and primitive life and love is one too, and whoever truly receives the truth and light, as it is, cannot but receive him as the living truth and life-giving Light, and to be heated and warmed inwardly by his beams, which will certainly cause some stirring and working without. For as much as in nature heat is always working, so is the fire of love, kindled in the heart, incessant that way,—“ Faith working by love ;” for action is the very life of life, that which both shews it, and preserves it.

Now what shall we say, to carry these things home to your hearts ? Where shall convincing words be had which may break the hardness of your hearts ? It is strange that you are in such a deep dream of delusion, that nothing can awake you out of it ? And how little is that in which you have to please yourselves ? Some external privileges, the temple of the Lord his covenant, and the seals of it, your ordinary hearing the word, and such like : but are there not many things in your hearts and ways that act the most contradictory lie to these that can be ? For wherefore do we thus meet together ? Do ye know an end, or propose any ? I scarce believe it of the most part. We come out of custom, and many as by constraint, and with little or no previous consideration of the great end of this work ; and when ye go forth, what fruit appears ? Your ordinary carnal and civil discourses succeed ; and who is it either bows his knee to pray for the divine blessing, or entertains that holy word

either in his own meditation, or speaks of it to the edification of others? Are you not, the most part of you, that ground of which Christ speaks, "that lies in the way side," and every thing comes and takes the seed up? Do ye either listen and apply your hearts to a presentness in hearing? Or is there any more account of it, than a sound in the ear, or any footstep or impression left in the heart, more than the flight of a bird in the air? And, alas! how many souls are choked and stifled? The truth suffocated in the very springing, by the thorns of the cares of this world, and the throng and importunity of businesses, and earthly desires? How many good motions come to no maturity by this means? How few of you use to pray in secret, and dedicate a time for retirement from the world, and enjoyment of God? Nay, you think you are not called to it, and if any be induced to it, and to public worship in their families, yet all the day over is but a flat contradiction to that. What earthly-mindedness! What unholiness of affection! What impurity of conversation! What one lust is subdued? What one sin mortified? Who increaseth more in knowledge of the truth, or in love of God? Is it not midnight with the most part of you? O the darkness of the ignorance of your minds, by which you know not that religion you profess, more than Turks who persecute it! And what are the ways in which ye walk? Are they not such ways as "will not come to the light, and hate the light, because it reproves them?" John iii. 19, 20, and xi. 9, 10. Are they not such in which men stumble, though they seem to walk easily and plainly in them? Yet, O that everlasting stumble that is at the end of them! when you shall fall out of one darkness of sin and delusion into an utter extreme, eternal darkness of destruction and damnation! O that fearful dungeon and pit of darkness you post unto! Therefore, if you love your own souls, be warned. I beseech you be warned to flee from that utter darkness; be awaked out of your deceiving dreams, and deluding self-flattering imaginations, and "Christ shall



give you light." The discovery of that gross darkness you walked in, in which you did not see whither you went; I say, the clear discerning of what it is, and whither it leads, is the first opening of that light, the first visit of that morning-star, that brings salvation.

If ye will not be convinced of that infinite danger you are in, yet ye are not the further from it. "He that walketh in darkness lieth," &c. His strong confidence and persuasion hath a lie, a contradiction in the bosom of it, and that will never bottom any true happiness. It is a lie acted by the hand, the foot, and all the members: a lie against the holy truth and word of God, and the very reproach of the name of Christ; a lie against yourselves, and your own professions, a foul-murdering lie, as well as a Christ-denying lie. And this lie (as a holy man saith) hath filled houses, cities, families, countries. It hath even overspread the whole nation, and filled all with darkness, horror, confusion, trouble, and anguish. Once being a holy nation by profession of a covenant with God, and our open, manifest, universal retraction of that, by an unholy, ungodly, and wicked conversation: this hath brought the sword against a hypocritical nation, and this will bring that far greater, incomparably more intolerable day of wrath upon the children of disobedience. Therefore let me exhort all of you, in the name of the Lord, as ye desire to be admitted to that eternally blessed society within the holy city, and not to be excluded among those "who commit abomination, and make a lie," that ye would henceforth impose this necessity upon yourselves, or know that it is laid upon you by God, to labour to know the will and truth of God, that you may see that light that shines in the gospel; and not only to receive it in your minds, but in your hearts by love, that so you may endeavour in all sincerity the doing of that truth, the conscionable practising of what you know. And this, as it is a great point of conformity to the light, so it will make you capable of more light from God; for he delights to shew his liberality, where he hath any

acceptance. Be not satisfied, O be not satisfied, with knowing these truths, and discoursing upon them; but make them further your own, by impressing them deeply in your hearts, and expressing them plainly in your ways! "This is pure religion and undefiled," James i. 27. "And is not this to know me, saith the Lord?" Jer. xxii. 16. Practice is real knowledge, because it is living knowledge. It is the very life and soul of Christianity, when there needs no more but the intimation of his will to carry the whole man. This is what we should all aspire unto, and not satisfy ourselves in our poor attainments below this.

#### XIV.

1 John i. 7.—But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

ART is the imitation of nature, and true religion is a divine art, that consists in the imitation of God himself, the author of nature. Therefore it is a more high and transcendent thing, of a sublimer nature than all the arts and sciences among men. Those reach but to some resemblance of the wisdom of God, expressed in his works; but this aspires to an imitation of himself in holiness, which is the glory of his name, and so to a fellowship with himself. Therefore there is nothing hath so high a pattern, or sublime an end. God himself, who is infinitely above all, is the pattern, and society with God is the end of it: and so it cannot choose, but where religion makes a solid impression on a soul. It must exceedingly raise and advance it to the most heroic and noble resolutions that it is capable of, in respect of which elevation of the soul after God, the highest project, the greatest aspirings, and the most elevating designs of men, are nothing but low, base, and wretched, having nothing of true greatness of mind in them, but running in an earthly

and sordid channel, infinitely below the poorest soul that is lifted up to God.

Since we have then so high a pattern as God, because he is infinitely removed from us in his own nature, we have him expressed to us under the name and notion of light, which makes all things manifest. Not only as dwelling in inaccessible light; that is, in his own incomprehensible, ineffable essence, even before this light was created; for he is in the light, and was in the light, when there was no sun to give light, because he was in himself environed, so to speak, with the infinite light and splendour of his own understanding, and beauty of his own holiness, and so dwelling in an all-fulness and self-sufficiency of blessedness. Not only is he thus in light, but he is a light to poor sinners, the most communicative Being, that ceaseth not continually to send forth streamings of that light and life into dark and dead souls. And therefore he is not only light himself, but a sun of righteousness, most beneficial in his influences, most impartial and free in his illumination; and so he is often called,—“my light and my salvation,” “our light,” “a light to me.” Psal. xxvii. 1, Micah vii. 8, Isa. xlii 6, 7. Now, it is this emission of light from him that first drives away that gross darkness that is over souls; for till then, in the darkness all was hid and covered. nothing seen. neither ourselves, nor God, neither the temper of our hearts, nor the course of our ways, nor the end they lead to. But it is the breaking in of a beam of that Sun of Righteousness that maketh any such discovery; as motes are not seen till the sun shine, though the house be full of them. In darkness there is nothing but confusion and disorder; and light only makes that disorder visible to the soul, to the affecting of the heart. Now, when once the soul hath received that light, there is a desire kindled in the heart after more of it; as when the eye hath once perceived the sweetness and pleasantness of the light, it opens itself, and exposeth itself to a further reception of more. And so the soul that is once thus happily prevented by the first

salutation and visit of "that day-spring from on high, while he was sitting in darkness, and in the shadow of death," Luke i. 78, 79, afterwards follows after that light, and desires nothing more than to be imbosomed with, it. That tender preventing mercy so draws the heart after it, that it can never be at perfect rest till the night be wholly spent, and all the shadows of it removed, and the sun clearly up above the horizon, and that is the day of that clear vision of God's face. But in the mean time, this is the great ambition and endeavour of such an one, to walk in that light, and this is the very entertainment of that fellowship with God. He is already in the light, that is to say, he is translated from a state of darkness to light, and endued with the living and saving knowledge of God in Jesus Christ. This is his state. He is in the light, one enlightened from above, having his eyes opened to discover the mystery of the iniquity of his own heart, and to see far off, to that bottomless pit of misery which his way would lead him to; one who hath by this divine illustration discovered eternal things, and seen things not seen; and withal, gotten some knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins. Now, such an one, being thus in the light, his duty is, and his infinite dignity besides, to walk in that light, that is, to lead all his life under that eternal light of God, which shines in the word, and to bring it all forth in his view; to make our whole course a progressive motion towards heaven, wherein that glorious light shines most gloriously. It is almost all one with that of Paul's, to have our conversation in heaven; for, to walk in the light, it is a kind of elevation of our actions, a raising them up to heaven, to that pure light; for after that and towards that is the soul's design.

Now to express to you in what it consists, I desire not to branch it forth in many particulars, which rather distract the mind than affect the heart. Only you may know, it consists especially in the inward retirements of the soul to God, and the outward shining of that light in our conversation to others. These are the chief parts

of it, borrowing from his light, and then lending and imparting it to others, by a holy conversation. Truly, we must needs conceive that the most lively and unmixed partaking of the light of God, and the sweetest society with him, is in the secret withdrawings of the soul from the world, and reposes upon God those little intervals, and, as it were, stolen hours of fellowship with God, that are taken from the multitude and throng of our business. These are the fittest opportunities of the transforming the soul into his similitude, and of purifying it as he is pure, of filling it with divine light and love; for then the heart lies, as it were, perpendicularly under his beams, and is opened before him, to give admission and entry to this transforming light; and it is the shining of God's countenance then upon the soul that draws it most towards conformity with him, and leaves an impression of light and love upon the soul.

Oh! that you were more acquainted with this, this aprication, so to speak, that is, sunning yourselves, and warming in the sun, the exposing and opening of your hearts frequently in secret, before this Sun of Righteousness. Now this, if you were acquaint with it, "would make your light so to shine before men, as your heavenly Father may be glorified," Matt. v. 16,—and that is the walking in that light of God. This makes a Christian to come forth, as Moses from the mount, with his face shining. He comes out from the retired access to God, with a lustre upon his carriage, that may beautify the gospel; and (as one saith well) with the tables of the law in both his hands, written in his practice, the light of the law shining in his life. And truly this is the Christian's diurnal motion in his lower sphere, wherein he carries about that light that is derived from the higher light. In all his converse with men, it shines from him to the glorifying of him that is the Father of lights, walking righteously and soberly, without offence, "doing good to all, especially the children of light;" extending offices of love and benevolence to every one; forbearing and forgiving offences,

not partaking with other men's sins ; and, finally, declaring in word and deed, that we have communion with the fountain of pure light, and one day expect to be translated out of this lower orb, where we are so far distant from him, and fixed in the highest of all ; where we may have the immediate, full, uninterrupted, and clearest aspect of his countenance, which shall then make the description that is here given of God communicable to us, that, as he is light, and in him is no darkness, so we, being fully and perfectly shined upon by him, may be light likewise, without any mixture of darkness, as here it is not.

Now, my beloved in the Lord, this is that we are called unto,—to walk thus in the light, in the light of obedience and sanctification ; and that is the great thing ye would learn to aspire unto, rather than to enjoy the light of consolation. Indeed, I conceive, that which maketh many of us walk in darkness, as is spoken in Isa. l. 10, that is, without comfort, peace, and joy, and without clear discerning our interest in God, is, because we walk in another darkness, that is, of sin and distance from God. The one darkness is introductive of the other ; nay, they cannot be long without other. The dark cloud of bold sinning, and careless uncircumspect walking, that cannot but eclipse the light of consolation, and fill the soul with some horror, anguish, and confusion. Therefore, if ye would walk in the light of joy and comfort, O take heed nothing be interposed between God and your souls ! You must likewise walk in the light of his law, which is as a lamp to the feet ; and this light, as the ray, begets that light of comfort, as the splendour, which is the second light of the sun. I know it is a disconsolate and sad condition, to walk without the light of the knowledge of our interest in God ; but I would earnestly recommend unto you two things to support you, and help you in that. One is, that you do not give over the chief point of this society with God, that is, walking in the light of his law and commandments, but that you do the more seriously address to the one, that you want the other. Certainly, it

ought to be no hinderance of your obedience, and patient continuing in obedience, that you know not your own interest, and that his countenance shines not so upon you. You know that sweet resolution, "I will wait upon the Lord, who hides his face," &c. Isa. viii. 17; Mic. vii. 7; and his own command, Isa. l. 10; Hos. xii. 6, "Ye that walk in such darkness," nevertheless, "stay upon God." Truly, there could be no greater evidence of thy interest than this,—to give patient attendance upon him in the ways of obedience, till he shine forth. This would in due time "bring forth thy righteousness as the light," if we would not subtract and withdraw ourselves from under the light, because it is presently overclouded. Then, moreover, you would know, that all this while that your interest in Christ lies dark and under cloud, you would then be most in the application of that blood to your souls, most in trusting and staying upon the name of God, and his absolute promises. Suppose thou do not as yet know that he is thine, yet dost thou not know that he is made thine, by believing in him? And therefore, while it is inevident that it is already, thou oughtest so much the more to labour, that what is not may be. Now, if thou canst not apply him to thy soul, as thine own possession, yet thou mayest, and so much the more oughtest to apply thy soul to him, and resign and offer thyself to him, as willing to be his possession, to be his, and no more thine own. In a word, when thine own experimental feeling of the work of God's Spirit fails within thee, then so much the more insist, and dwell upon the meditation and belief of the general promises, which are the proper object of faith, and not of sense. As our own interest is the proper object of sense, and not of faith; therefore the defect in the one needs not resound upon the other. To sum up all in one word,—if thou thinkest that thou hast not yet believed in Christ, and hast no interest in him, I will not dispute with thee, to persuade thee thou art mistaken, for all this debate would be in the dark, because thou art in darkness. But one thing I would say unto thee,—labour to do that which thou would-

est do, which thou must do, if such a case were granted. Suppose it were so, that thou hadst no interest in him, what wouldst thou do then? I am sure thou wouldst say, I would labour by any means to have him mine. Why, then, thou knowest that cannot be before believing, and receiving him on his promises, and not at all but by believing. Therefore, since that this is it you must at length turn unto, suppose the case were decided, why do you not presently, rather without more wearying yourselves in the greatness of your way, turn in thither, as to a place of refuge, without further disputing in the business; and so by believing in Christ, and waiting upon him in his ways, you shall put that out of question, which debating would make an endless question. The Lord make you wise to know the things that belong to your peace.

## XV.

I John i. 7.—And the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

CAN two walk together except they be agreed? As darkness cannot have fellowship with light, till it be changed into some conformity to the light; even so there can neither be any fellowship in walking, nor conformity in nature, between God and us, who are enemies to him by nature, unless there be some agreement and reconciliation of the difference. Now, here is that which maketh the atonement,—“The blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” This is it that takes away the difference between God and men, and makes reconciliation for us; this blood hath quenched the flame of indignation and wrath kindled in heaven against us. And this alone can quench and extinguish the flames and furies of a tormented soul, that is burned up with the apprehension of his anger. All other things thou canst apply or cast upon them will be as oil to increase them, whether it be to cool thyself in the sha-



dows of the world's delights, such a poor shift as the rich glutton would have taken in hell. Those drops of cold water that thou canst distil out of the creature will never give any solid ease to thy conscience; thou mayest abate the fury of it, or put it off for a season. Thou who art afraid of hell and wrath, mayest procure some short vacancy from those terrors by turning to the world; but certainly they will recur again, and break out in a greater fire, like a fever that is not diminished, but increased by much drinking cold water. Or if thou go about to refresh thyself, and satisfy thy challenges by thy own attainments in religion, and by reflection upon thy own heart and ways; finding something in thy esteem that may counter-balance thy evils, and so give thee some confidence of God's favour; these, I say, are but deceitful things, and will never either quench the displeasure of God for thy sins, but rather add fuel to it, because thou justifiest thyself, which is an abomination before him. Nor yet will it totally extinguish and put to silence the clamours of thy conscience, but, that some day thou shalt be spoiled of all that self-confidence and self-defence, and find thyself so much the more displeasing to God, that thou didst please thyself, and undertake to pacify him. Therefore, my beloved, let me, above all things, recommend this unto you, as the prime foundation of all religion, upon which all our peace with God, pardon of sin, and fellowship with God must be built,—that the blood of Jesus Christ be applied unto your consciences by believing; and that, first of all, upon the discovery of your enmity with God, and infinite distance from him, you apply your hearts unto this blood, which is the atonement—to the reconciling sacrifice, which alone hath virtue and power with God. Do not imagine that any peace can be without this. Would ye walk with God, which is a badge of agreement? Would ye have fellowship with God, which is a fruit of reconciliation? Would ye have pardon of sins, and the particular knowledge of it, which is the greatest effect of favour? And all this, without and before application of

Christ, "who is our peace." in whom only the Father is well pleased? Will ye seek these, and yet dispute this point of believing, as if it were possible to attain these without the sprinkling of that blood on the heart, which indeed cleanseth it from an evil-accusing conscience? If you desire to walk in the light, as he is in the light, why weary ye yourselves in bye-ways? Why take ye such a compass of endless and fruitless agitation, and perplexity of mind, and will not rather come straightway at it, by the door of Jesus Christ; for he is the new and living way into which you must enter, if ye would walk in the light? And the wounds of his side, out of which his blood gushed, these open you a way of access to him, because he was pierced for us. That stream of blood, if ye come to it and follow it all along, it will certainly carry you to the sea of light and love, where you have fellowship with God. And, oh! how much comfort is in it, that there is such a stream running all the way of our walking with God—all the way of our fellowship! That fountain of Christ's blood runs not dry, but runs along with the believer, for the cleansing of his after pollutions of his defilements, even in the very light itself. This, then, as it is the foundation of peace and communion with God, so it is the perpetual assurance and confirmation of it, that which first gives boldness, and that alone which still continues boldness in it. It is the first ground, and the constant warrant and security of it, without which it would be as soon dissolved as made. If that blood did not run along all this way, to wash all his steps; if the way of light and fellowship with God were not watered and refreshed with the continual current of this blood, certainly none could walk in it without being consumed. Therefore it is, that the mercy of God, and riches of grace in Christ, hath provided this blood for us, both to cleanse the sins of ignorance before believing, and the sins of light after believing, that a poor sinner may constantly go on his way, and not be broken off from God by his infirmities and escapes in the way.

You see, then, the gospel runs in these two golden streams,—pardon of sin, and purity of walking. They run undividedly, all along in one channel; yet without confusion one with another, as it is reported of some great rivers that run together between the same banks, and yet retain distinct colours and natures all the way, till they part. But these streams that glad the city of God never part one from another. The cleansing blood and the purifying light, these are the entire and perfect sum of the gospel. Purification from sin, the guilt of sin, and the purity of walking in the light flowing from that, make up the full complexion of Christianity; which are so nearly conjoined together, that if they be divided they cease to be, and cannot any of them subsist, save in men's deluded imagination. The end of washing in the blood of Christ is, that we may come to this light, and have fellowship with it; for the darkness of hell, the utter darkness of the curse of God, which overspreads the unbelieving soul, and eclipses all the light of God's countenance from him,—that dark and thick cloud of guiltiness, that heap of unrenewed conversation; this, I say, must be removed by the cleansing of the blood of Christ, and then the soul is admitted to enjoy that light, and walk in it. And it is removed chiefly for this end, that there may be no impediment in the way of this fellowship. This blood cleanseth, that you, being cleansed, may henceforth walk in purity; and there is no purity like that of the light of God's countenance and commands. And so you are washed in the blood of Christ, that you may walk in the light of God; and take heed that you defile not your garments again. But if so be, and certainly it will be, considering our weakness, that you defile yourselves again, like foolish children, who, after they have washed, run to the puddle again, forgetting that they were cleansed; if either your daily infirmities trouble, or some grosser pollution defile and waste your conscience, know that this blood runs all along in the same channel of your obligation to holy walking, and is as sufficient now as ever, to cleanse you from

all sin, from sins of daily incursion, and sins of a grosser nature. There is no exception in that blood, let there be none in your application to it and apprehension of it. Now, this is not to give boldness to any man to sin, or continue in sin, because of the lengthened use and continued virtue and efficacy of the blood of Christ; for if any man draw such a result from it, and improve it to the advantage of his flesh, he declares himself to have no portion in it, never to have been washed by it. For what soul can in sobriety look upon that blood shed by the Son of God, to take away the sins of the world, and find an emboldening to sin from that view? Who can wash and cleanse here, and presently think of defilement, but with indignation?

I speak these things the rather, because there is a two-fold misapprehension of the gospel among Christians, and on both hands much darkness and stumbling is occasioned. We have poor narrow spirits, and do not take entire truth in its full comprehension, and so we are as unfit and unequal discerners of the gospel, and receivers of it, as he that would judge of a sentence by one word, of a book by one page, of a harmony by one note, and of the world by one parcel of it. The beauty and harmony of things consist in their entire union; and though there should appear many discrepancies and unpleasant discords in several parts, yet all united together, makes up a pleasant comfort. Now this is our childish foolishness, that we look upon the gospel only by halves, and this being alone seen, begets misapprehensions and mistakes in our minds; for ordinarily we supply that which we see not with some fancy of our own. When the blood of Jesus Christ is holden out in its full virtue, in the large extent of its efficacy, to cleanse all sin, and to make peace with God, and wipe away all transgressions, as if they had never been; the generality of you never apprehending much your own desperate condition, nor conceiving an absolute necessity of a change; you think this is all that is in the gospel, and begin to flatter yourselves, and bliss yourselves, though

you live in the imaginations of your own hearts, and never apprehend the absolute need and inevitable sequel of walking in purity after pardon. And, alas! there is something of this sometimes overtakes the hearts of true believers, in the slight and overly consideration of the mercy of God, and blood of Christ; you do not lay the constraint upon your hearts to a holy conversation. I say, it is not because you apprehend that blood, that you take more liberty to the flesh, but rather because you too slightly and superficially consider it, and that but the one half of it, without piercing into the proper end of that cleansing, which is, that we may walk in purity.

But, on the other hand, some believing souls, having their desires enlarged after more holiness and conformity to God, and apprehending not only the necessity of it, but the beauty and comeliness of it, yet finding withal, how infinitely short they come, and how oft their purposes are broken and disappointed, and themselves plunged in the mire of their own filthiness; this doth discourage them, and drives them to such a despondency and dejection of spirit, that they are like to give over the way of holiness as desperate. Now, my beloved, for you who look upon the gospel by a parcel, and such a parcel as enjoins much upon you, I would earnestly beseech to open and enlarge your hearts to receive the full body of the truth; to look upon that cleansing blood as well as that pure light; to consider the perpetual use of the one, until you have fully attained the other. Know that the fountain is kept open, and not shut; not only to admit you to come at first, but to give ready access in all after-defilement; and there is no word more comprehensive than this here, "it cleanseth from all sin." All thy exceptions, doubts, and difficulties, are about some particular sins and circumstances; thy debates run upon some exception; but here is an universal comprehensive word, that excludes all exception—no kind of sin, either for quality, or degree, or circumstance, is too great for this blood; and therefore, as you have reason to be humbled under your failings, so there is no reason to

be discouraged, but rather to revive your spirits and vigour again in the study of this walking in the light, knowing that one day we shall be in the light, as he is in it. Nay, take this along with you, as your strength and encouragement to your duty, as the greatest provocation to more purity,—that there is so constant readiness of pardon in that blood.

## XVI.

1 John i. 8.—If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

“THE night is far spent, the day is at hand,” Rom. xiii. 12. This life is but as night, even to the godly. There is some light in it,—some star-light, but it is mixed with much darkness of ignorance and sin; and so it will be, till the sun arise. and the morning of their translation to heaven come. But though it be called night in one sense, in regard of that perfect glorious perpetual day in heaven, yet they are called the children of light, and of the day, and are said to walk in the light, and are exhorted to walk honestly as in the day; because, though there is a mixture of darkness in them, of weakness in their judgments, and impurity in their affections, yet they are *nati ad majora*, born to greater things, and aspiring to that perfect day. There is so much light as to discern these night monsters, their own corruptions, and Satan’s temptations,—to fight continually against them. They are about this noble work, the purifying themselves from sin and darkness; so that they lie in the middle, between the light of angels and glorified spirits, that hath no darkness in it, and the midnight of the rest of the world, who are buried in darkness and wickedness, and lie entombed in it, as the word is, 1 John v. 19, “The whole world, *κεῖται*, lieth in wickedness: but we know that we are of God:” therefore the apostle subjoins here very seasonably a cau-

tion or correction of that which was spoken about the walking in the light, and fellowship with God ; which words sound out some perfection, and, to our self-flattering minds, might possibly suggest some too high opinion of ourselves. If we, even we that have fellowship with God, even I, the apostle, and you believing Christians ; if we say, we have no sin, no darkness in us, “ we do but deceive ourselves, and deny the truth.” But who will say that I have no sin ? Solomon gives a challenge to all the world, Prov. xx. 9, “ Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin ? ” And, indeed, there is no man so far a stranger to himself ; but if he, in sobriety and calmness, retire into his own heart, the very evidence of the impurity of it will extort this confession from him. As it useth to be said of an atheist, he feels that Divine Majesty within his secret thoughts and conscience which he denieth with his mouth ; and he is often forced to tremble at the remembrance of him whom he will not confess. So if there be any so far bewitched and enchanted into so gross and impudent a delusion, as to assert his own perfection and vacancy from sin, and freedom from obligation to any divine command, (as this time is fruitful in such monsters), yet I dare be bold to say, that in the secret and quiet reflection on themselves, they find that which they will not confess. Inwardly they feel what outwardly they deny, and cannot but some time or other be filled with horror and anguish in their consciences, by that inwardly witnessing and checking principle, when God shall give it liberty to exercise its power over them. The end of such will be, as of professed atheists. They pretend the most secure contempt and most fearless disregard of God ; but then, when he awakes to judgment, or declares himself in something extraordinary, they are subject to the most panic fears and terrors, because then there is a party armed within against them, which they had disarmed in security, and kept in chains. So, whensoever such men, of such high pretensions, and sublime professions, who love to speak nothing but mys-

teries, and presume to such glorious discoveries of new lights of spiritual mysteries ; when these, I say, have flattered themselves for a season, in the monstrous exorbitant conceit of their own perfection, and immunity from sin, and, it may be, deceived some others too ; when they have lived some time in this golden dream of innocency, the time will come, either when the mighty hand of God is on them here, or when they must enter eternity, that they shall awake, and find all their iniquities in battle array, mustered by the Lord of hosts, in their conscience against themselves ; and then they shall be the rarest examples of fear, terror, and unbelief, who pretended to the greatest confidence, clearness, and innocency. My beloved, let us establish this as an infallible rule, to discern the spirits by, and to know what religion is,—if it tend to glorify God, and abase man, to make him more humble, as well as holy,—if it give the true and perfect discovery of God to man, and of man to himself,—“ that is true religion and undefiled.” But away with those sublime speculations, those winged and airy mysteries, those pretensions to high discoveries and new lights, if they do not increase that good old light of “ humble walking with thy God,” &c. If they tend to the loosing of the obligation of divine commands on thee ; if they ravish man so high that he seeth not himself any more to be a poor, miserable, and darkened creature, certainly that is no fellowship with the pure light, which is not continually the discovery and further manifestation of more sin and darkness in us. For, what is a man’s light in the dark night of this life, but the clearest light of that darkness that is in man ? And his holiness, what is it, but the abhorring of himself for that ? It is true, something further is attained than the knowing of this ; but it is always so far short of that original pattern, that the best way of expressing our conformity to it, is by how much we apprehend our distance and deformity from it.

But, my beloved, this is not all that is here meant, nor must we take it so grossly, as if this did only check the



open professors of a sinless, spotless sanctity. Nay, certainly, there is another way of saying this than by the tongue, and many other ways of self-deceiving than that gross one, many more universal and more dangerous, because less discernible. There is something of this, that even true believers fall into, and there is something of it more common to the generality of professed Christians.

Among believers in Christ there is much difference in self-judging ; extreme contrarieties, both between diverse persons, and in one and the same, at diverse times. You know that some are kept in the open view of their own sins and infirmities, and, while they aim at holiness, they are wholly disabled to that worthy endeavour by their discouragements, arising from the apprehension of their own weakness and infinite short-coming. Now, to elevate and strengthen such spirits, that word was seasonably cast in, "and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin : " for it properly belongs to the comfort of such fainting souls ; and it is all one, as if he had said, Up and be doing, and the blood of Christ shall cleanse your evil doings. He goeth not about to persuade them to have better thoughts of themselves, or lower apprehensions of their sins, but only to have higher and more suitable thoughts of Christ, and the virtue of his blood ; and this is the only cure,—not to abate from that low esteem of ourselves, but to add to the esteem, and grow in the lively apprehension of Christ. I would not counsel you to think yourselves better, but to think better of him, that all your confidence may arise from him.

Now there are others, (and it may be that same person at another time,—for the wind of temptation winds about, and is sometimes in one corner, sometimes in another ;—our adversary useth many stratagems, and will seem to flee before us, in yielding us the victory over our unbelief, that he may in his flight return, and throw some other dart upon us unawares), when they have attained any fervency of desires, and height of design after holiness and walking with God, and this is seconded with any lively

endeavours, and this confirmed and strengthened with those presences of God, and accesses into the soul, that fill it with some sweetness;—then, I say, they are ready to apprehend too highly of themselves, as if they had attained, and to look below upon others with some disdain. Then there is not that present discovery of themselves, that may intermingle humble mourning with it, but a kind of unequal measuring their attainments by their desires, which in all true Christians are exceedingly mounted above themselves. Now, indeed, this is in effect, and really to say, “we have no sin.” Herein is a delusion, a self-deceiving fancy, that begets too much self-pleasing. Let us know where our stance is, infinitely below either our duty or our desire; and remind this often, that we may not be in hazard to be drunk with self-love and self-deceit in this particular. Besides, are there not many Christians, who, having been once illuminated, and had some serious exercises in their souls, both of sorrow for sin and fear of wrath, and comfort by the gospel, and being accustomed to some discharge of religious duties in private and public, sit down here, and have not mind of further progress? They think, if they keep that stance, they are well, and so have few designs or endeavours after more communion with God, or purification from sin. Now this makes them degenerate to formality. They wither and become barren, and are exposed by this to many temptations which overcome them. But, my beloved, is not this really and indeed to say, “we have no sin?” Do not your walking, and the posture of your spirits import so much, as if you had no sin to wrestle with, no more holiness to aspire unto; as if ye had no further race to run to obtain the crown? Do not deceive yourselves, by thinking it sufficient to have so much honesty and grace, as in your opinion may put you over the black line in ir-regeneration, as if ye would seek no more than is precisely necessary for salvation? Truly, if ye be so minded, you give a miserable hint, that you are not yet translated from the black side of darkness. I do not say that all such

are unconverted ; but, if you continue thus, without stirring up yourselves to a daily conversion and renovation, ye do too much to blot out the evidence of your conversion, and at length it may prove to some a self-destroying deceit, when they shall find themselves not passed over that line that passeth between heaven and hell, which they were studying to find out, only that they might pass so far over it, as might keep their soul and hell asunder, without earnest desires and advancement towards heaven in conformity to God. Now, for the generality of professed Christians, though there be none who have that general confession of sin oftener and more readily in their mouths ; yet, I suppose, it is easy to demonstrate that there is much of this self-deceit in them, which declares that the truth is not in them. You know both God and man construct of men by their ways, not by their words ; and the Lord may interpret your hearts by their dispositions, and raise a collection of atheism out of all together : “ The fool hath said in his heart,” &c. Even so say I, many pretended Christians say in their heart, “ we have no sin.” How prove ye that ? I seek nothing else to prove it, than your own ordinary clearings and excusings of yourselves. Ye confess ye are sinners, and break all the commands ; yet come to particulars, and I know not one of twenty that will cordially or seriously take with almost any sin. Yea, what you have granted in a general, you retract and deny it in all the particulars ; which declares both that even that which you seem to know, you are altogether strangers to the real truth of it, and that you are over-blinded with a fond love of yourselves. I know not to what purposes your general acknowledgments are, but to be a mask or shadow to deceive you, to be a blind to hide you from yourselves ; since the most part of you, whensoever challenged of any particular sin, or inclination to it, justify yourselves ; and whenever ye are put to a particular confession of your sins, you have all rapt up in such a bundle of confusion, that you never

know one sin by another. Certainly, "ye deceive yourselves, and the truth is not in you."

Let me add, moreover, another instance. Do you not so live, and walk in sin so securely, so impenitently, as if you had no sin, no fear of God's wrath? Do not the most part contentedly and peaceably live in so much ignorance of the gospel, as if they had no need of Christ? and so, by consequence, as if they had no sin: for if you did believe in the heart, and indeed consider that your hearts are sinks of iniquity and impurity, would you not think it necessary to apply to the Physician? And would you not then labour to know the Physician, and the gospel, which is the report of him? Certainly, inasmuch as you take no pains for the knowledge of a Saviour, you declare that you know not your sin; for if ye know the one, ye could not but search to know the other. What is the voice of most men's walking? Doth it not proclaim this, that they think there is no sin in them? For if there be sin in you, is there not a curse upon you, and wrath before you? And if you did really see the one, would you not see the other? And did you see it, would it not drive you to more serious thoughts? Would it not fright you? Would it not cause you often to retire into yourselves, and from the world? And, above all, how precious would the tidings of a Saviour be, that now are common and contemptible? Would you not every day wash in that blood? Would the current of repentance dry? But, forasmuch as you are not exercised this way, give no thoughts nor time for reconciliation with God, walk without any fear of hell, and without any earnest and serious study of changing your ways, and purifying your hearts; in a word, though ye confess sin in the general, yet your whole carriage of heart and ways declare so much, that you think it not a thing much to be feared, or that a man should busy himself about it; that a man may live in it, and be well here and hereafter. And is not this to deny the very nature of sin, and to deceive your own souls?

## XVII.

1 John i. 9.—If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, &c.

THE current of sin dries not up, but runs constantly while we are in this life. It is true, it is much diminished in a believer, and it runs not in such an universal flood over the whole man as it is in the unbeliever. Yet there is a living spring of sin within the godly, which is never ceasing to drop out pollution and defilement, either upon their whole persons, or, at least, to intermingle it with their good actions. Now, there is no comfort for this, but this one, that there is another stream of the blood of Jesus Christ that never dries up, is never exhausted, never emptied, but flows as full and as free, as clear and fresh as ever it did: and this is so great, and of so great virtue, that it is able to swallow up the stream of our pollutions, and to take away the daily filth of a believer's conversation. Now indeed, though the blood of Jesus Christ be of such infinite virtue and efficacy, that it were sufficient to cleanse the sins of the whole world, it would be an over-ransom for the souls of all men, there is so much worth in it. That flood of guiltiness that hath drowned the world,—this flood of Christ's blood that gushed out of his side, is of sufficient virtue to cleanse it perfectly away. Notwithstanding of this absolute universal sufficiency, yet certain it is, that it is not actually applied unto the cleansing of all men's sins, but yet the most part of men are still drowned in the deluge of their own wickedness, and lie entombed in darkness; therefore it concerns us to know the way of the application of this blood to the cleansing of sinners; and this way is set down in this verse, "If we confess our sins, he is just to forgive." There was something hinted at obscurely in the preceding verse; for when he shews, that such as say they have no sin, who either, by

the disposition of their hearts, or carriage of their ways, do by intrepertation say, they want sin, "such deceive themselves. and the truth is not in them," and so they have no benefit of that blood that cleanseth from all sin. And so it is imported here, that though the blood of Christ be fully sufficient to cleanse all sin, yet it is not so prostituted and basely spent upon sinners, as to be bestowed upon them who do not know their sins, and never enter into any serious and impartial examination of themselves. Such, though they say they are sinners, yet never descending into themselves to search their own hearts and ways, and so never coming to the particular knowledge of their sins, and feeling of them, they cannot at all make application of that blood to their own consciences, either seriously or pertinently. Though the river and fountain of Christ's blood run by them, in the daily preaching of the gospel, yet being destitute of this daily self-inspection and self-knowledge, being altogether ignorant of themselves, they can no more wash here than those who never heard of this blood. They being strangers to themselves, sets them at as great distance and estrangement from the blood of Christ, as if they were wholly strangers to the very preaching of this blood. Let us, then, have this first established in our hearts.—that there is no cleansing from sin, without the knowledge of sin; and that there is no true knowledge of sin, without a serious soul-examination of sin. These are knit together in their own nature. For how should our sins be pardoned, when we know nothing of them but in a confused generality that can never affect the heart? How should our sins not be opened and discovered before the holiness of God, when they are always covered unto us. and hid from our eyes? Certainly, the righteousness and wisdom of God require, that such a monstrous thing, so great an enemy of God's holiness, be not wholly passed away in silence without observation. If we do not observe, he will; for to what purpose should pardon be so lavished upon them who are not capable of knowing what favour

and grace is in it? And certainly, that none can know without the feeling knowledge of the height and heinousness of sin. Now, I pray you, how should you know your sins, when you will not allow any time for the searching of yourselves? Many cannot say, that ever they did purposely and deliberately withdraw from the world, and separate their spirits for this business of self-examination; and therefore you remain perpetually strangers to yourselves, and as great strangers to the power and virtue of this blood.

Now, in this verse, he declares it plainly in what way and method sin is pardoned by this blood. By the former verse, we have so much, that it is necessary we must search and try our ways, that so we may truly know our sins, and charge them upon ourselves; and here it is superadded, that we must confess them to him: and the promise is annexed, "he is just and faithful to forgive." Now, this confession of sin is very fitly subjoined, both to that which he declared of the great end of that gospel,—communion with God,—and that which was immediately holden forth of the remaining virtue of Christ's blood. For might a poor soul say, How shall I come to partake of that blessed society? I am a sinner, and so an enemy to God; how shall this enmity be removed? And if the answer be made, "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin," and so maketh access for a sinner to enter into this society; yet a question remains, and how shall the virtue of that be applied to my soul? It is sufficient I know, for all, but what way may I have the particular benefit of it? Here it is fully satisfied, "if we confess our sins, God is just and faithful to forgive." He lieth under some obligation to pardon us. Now, many of you may think, if this be the way, and these be the terms of pardon, then we hope all shall be pardoned; for if there be no more but to confess our sins, who will not willingly do that, and who doth not daily do it? As one said, if it be sufficient to accuse, none will be innocent: *si accusasse sufficiat, nemo innocens erit*; so you may think, *si confiteri*

*sufficiat, nemo reus erit.* If it be sufficient to confess, none will be guilty. But, my beloved, let us not deceive ourselves with the present first apprehensions of words that occur in this kind. It is true, as ye take confession, there is nothing more ordinary; but, if it be taken in the true scripture meaning, and in the realest sense, I fear there is nothing among men so extraordinary. I desire you may but consider how you take this word, in your dealings with men;—you take it certainly in a more real sense than you use it in religion. If any had done you some great wrong or injury, suppose your servant, or inferior, what acknowledgment would you take from him of his wrong? If he confessed his wrong only in generally ambiguous terms; if he did it either lightly, or without any sense or sorrow for it; if he did withal excuse and extenuate his fault, and never ceased, notwithstanding of all his confession, to do the like wrong when occasion offered, would you not think this a mockery, and would it not rather provoke you than pacify you? Now, when you take words in so real and deep significations in your own matters, what gross delusion is it, that you take them in the slightest and emptiest meaning in those things that relate to God? And I am sure the most part of men's confessions are of that nature which I have described,—general, ignorant, senseless, without any particular view, or lively feeling of the vileness and loathsomeness of sin, and their own hearts. Whenever it comes to particulars, there is a multitude of extenuations and pretences to hide and cover the sin; and generally men never cease the more from sinning. It puts no stop in their running, as the horse to the battle. To-day they confess it, and to-morrow they act it again with as much delight as before. Now, of this I may say, “Offer it to thy governor, and see if he will be pleased with thee,” or let another offer such an acknowledgment of wrong to thee, and see if it will please thee; and if it will not, why deceive ye yourselves with the outward visage of things in these matters that are of greatest soul-concernment? Should they not be taken in the most in-



ward and substantial signification that can be? Lest you be deceived with false appearances, and, while you give but a shadow of confession, you receive but a shadow of forgiveness, such a thing as will not carry and bear you out before God's tribunal; therefore we must needs take it thus, that confession of sin is the work of the whole man, and not of the mouth only. It is the heart, tongue, and all that is in a man, joining together to the acknowledgment of sin, and God's righteousness; therefore it includes in it, not only a particular knowledge of our offences, and the temper of our hearts, but a sensible feeling of the loathsomeness and heinousness of these. And this is the spring that it flows from,—a broken and contrite heart, that is bruised under the apprehensions of the weight of guiltiness, and is embittered with the sense of the gall of iniquity that possesseth the heart. Here, then, is the great moment of confession and repentance; what is the inward fountain it flows from? If the heart be brought to the distinct and clear view of itself, and to discern the iniquity and plague of it, and so to fall down under the mighty hand of God, and before his tribunal, as guilty, as not being able or willing to open his mouth in an excuse or extenuation of sin, or to plead for compassion from any consideration in himself; a soul thus placed between iniquities set in order and battle array, on the one hand, and the holy law and righteousness of God on the other hand; the filthiness of the one filling with shame and confusion, and the dreadfulness of the other causing fear and trembling: in this posture, I say, for a soul to come and fall at the Judge's feet, and make supplication to him in his Son Christ; thus being inwardly pressed to vent and pour out our hearts before him, in the confession of our sins, and to flee unto the city of refuge,—his mercy and grace that is declared in Jesus Christ,—this, I say, is indeed to confess our sins: for then confession is an exoneration and disburdening of the heart,—it flows from the abundance of the inward contrition of it. And as this must be the spring of it, so there is another stream that

will certainly flow from the ingenuous confession of our sins, that is, a forsaking of them. These are the two streams that flow from one head and spring, the inward fountain of contrition and sorrow for sin; there is a holy indignation kindled in the heart against sin, and an engagement upon such a soul, as indeed flees to mercy, to renounce sin; and here is the complete nature of true repentance. Solomon joins them, "He that confesseth and forsaketh shall have mercy," Prov. xxvii. 13. And this is opposed to covering of sins—"for he that covereth his sins shall not prosper." And what is that to cover his sin? Confessing them in a general confused notion, without any distinct knowledge, or sense of any particular guiltiness, that is covering of sins, or confessing sin; and not forsaking of it, that is a covering of sin: for to act sin over again, with continual fresh delight and vigour, is to retract our confessions and to bury and cover them with the mould of new transgressions. Now, take this unto you, "you shall not prosper!" what can be said worse? For you are but in a dream of happiness, and you shall one day be shaken out of it, and that fancied pardon shall vanish, and then your sins that you covered in this manner, shall be discovered before the Judge of the world, and "you shall not stand in judgment."

## XVIII.

1 John i. 9.—If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, &c.

THE freedom of God's grace, and the greatness of his wisdom, shine forth most brightly in the dispensation of the gospel, and both of them beautify and illustrate one another. That there is, first, an expiation of sin by the blood of Jesus Christ, that a way is laid down of reconciling the world, and that "by the blood of the cross;" that peace is purchased, and so preached unto sinners, as a

thing already procured, and now only to be applied unto the soul by faith;—herein doth the inestimable riches of the grace of God expose itself to the view of angels and men. That the great work of redemption is ended, ere it come to us; and there remains nothing, but to publish it to the world, and invite us to come and receive it, and have a part in it;—all is ready, the feast prepared, and set on the table, and there wants nothing but guests to eat of it, and these are daily called by the gospel to come to this table, which the wisdom of the Father hath prepared for us, without either our knowledge or concurrence. Besides, the very terms of proposing the gospel, speak forth absolute freedom: what can be more free and easy than this? “Christ is sent to die for sinners, and to redeem them from the curse,—only receive him, come to him, and believe in him.” He hath undertaken to save, only do you consent too, and give up your name to him;—ye have nothing to do to satisfy justice, or purchase salvation, only be willing that he do it for you. or rather acquiesce in that he hath done already, and rest on it. But how shall our sins be pardoned, and justice satisfied? Only confess your sins to him, and ye are forgiven, not for your confession, but for Christ; only acknowledge thine iniquity and wrongs, and he hath taken another way to repair his justice than by thy destruction and condemnation. He is so far from extending his justice against thee, that he is rather engaged upon his faithfulness and justice to forgive thee, because of his promise.

Yet, ye would not conceive so of this manner of proposal of forgiveness and salvation, as if the requiring of such a thing as repentance in thee were any derogation from the absoluteness of his grace; for it is not required, either to the point of satisfaction to God's justice, and expiation of sin, for that is done already upon the cross. Christ was not offered to save sinners, he was not sent upon the previous condition of their repentance: nay, “while we were yet enemies, Christ died for the un-

godly." So that to the business of our redemption there was no concurrence upon our part, nor influence upon it by our carriage; for he considered us as sinners, and miserable, and so saved us. And now, to the actual application of these preventing mercies,—it is true, it is needful in the wise and reasonable dispensation of God, that sinners be brought to the knowledge and sensible acknowledgment of their sin and misery, and so be upon rational inducements of misery within, and mercy without, of self-indigency, and Christ's sufficiency, be drawn unto Jesus Christ, and so to a partaking of those purchased privileges of forgiveness of sin, peace with God, &c. I say, all this is so far from diminishing a jot of that absolute freedom of grace, that it rather jointly proclaims the riches of grace and wisdom both, that repentance should be given to an impenitent sinner, and faith freely bestowed on an unbelieving sinner; and withal, that remission and salvation, together with faith and repentance, should be brought to us by his death, while we were yet enemies;—this doth declare the most unparalleled bounty and grace that the heart of man can imagine; and withal, that remission of sins is joined to confession, and salvation to faith, herein the wisdom of God triumphs; for what way is it possible to declare that freedom of grace, to the sensible conviction of a sinner, and so to demonstrate it to all men's consciences. except by making them return within, to see their own absolute unworthiness, vileness, and in-correspondency to such mercies, and so drawing an acknowledgment of his grace from the mouths and consciences of all? How shall a soul know that rich super-abundant grace, if he know not the abundance of his sins? How shall he profess the one, except he withal confess the other? Let us imagine an impenitent sinner, continuing in rebellion, pardoned and forgiven: and is there anything more contrary to common sense and reason, to be in God's favour, and yet not accepting that favour; to be a friend, and yet an enemy; to have sins forgiven, and yet not known, not confessed? These, I say, sound some

plain dissonancy and discord to our very first apprehension. Certainly, this is the way to declare the glory of his grace, in the hiding and covering of sin, even to discover sin to the sinner; else if God should hide sin, and it be hid withal from the conscience, both thy sin and God's grace should be hid and covered, neither the one nor the other would appear. Take it thus then,—the confession of sin is not for this end, to have any casual influence upon thy remission, or to procure any more favour and liking with God; but it is simply this, the confession of sin is the most accommodate way of the profession and publication of the grace of God in the forgiving of sins. Faith and repentance are not set down as conditions pre-required on thy part, that may procure salvation or forgiveness, but they are inseparably annexed unto salvation and forgiveness, to the end that they may manifest to our sensible conviction, that grace and freedom of grace which shines in forgiveness and salvation.

“He is just and faithful,” &c. Herein is the wonder of the grace of God increased, that when we are under an obligation to infinite punishment for sin, and bound guilty before his justice, that the “most great and potent Lord,” who can easily rid himself of all his enemies, and do all his pleasure in heaven and earth, should come under an obligation to man to forgive him his sin. A strange exchange! Man is standing bound by the cords of his own sins over the justice of God,—he is under that insoluble tye of guiltiness. God in the mean time is free, and loosed from the obligation of the first covenant, that is, his promise of giving life to man. We have loosed him from that voluntary engagement, and are bound under a curse. And yet, behold the permutation of grace,—man is loosed from sin, to which he was bound, and God is bound to forgive sin, to which he was not bound. He enters into a new and voluntary engagement by his promise, and gives right to poor creatures to sue and seek forgiveness of him, according to his faithfulness. Yet in this plea, as it becomes us to use confidence, because he gives us ground by his pro-

mises, so we should season it with humility, knowing how infinitely free and voluntary his condescension is, being always mindful, that he may in righteousness exact punishment of us for sin, rather than we seek forgiveness from him. And yet seek it we ought, because he hath engaged his faithful promise; which opportunity to neglect, and not to improve, either through fear or security, were as high contempt and disobedience to him, as those sins by which we offend him.

Certainly, the very name of God, revealed to us or known by nature's light, those general characters of his name, mercy and goodness, power and greatness, might suffice to so much, as to make us, in the apprehensions of our own guiltiness and provocations of his holiness, to look no other way than to his own merciful and gracious nature. Suppose we had nothing of a promise from him, by which he is bound; yet as the very apprehension of the general goodness, and unlimited bounty, and original happiness that is in God, ought naturally to draw the creature towards him in all its wants, to supplicate his fulness, that can supply all necessities, without lessening his own abundance; even so, if we did only apprehend that God is the fountain of mercy, and that he is infinitely above us and our injuries, and that all our being and well-being eternally consists in his sole favour; this, I say, alone considered, might draw us to a pouring out our hearts before him, in the acknowledgment of our guiltiness, and casting ourselves upon his mercy, as the term is used in war, when there is no quarter promised, and no capitulation made. It is the last refuge of a desperate sinner, to render unto God upon mercy, to resign himself to his free disposal. Since I cannot but perish, may a soul say, without him, there is no way of escaping from his wrath, I will rather venture, and "go in to the King, and if I perish, I perish." There is more hope in this way to come to him, than to flee from him. Perhaps he may shew an act of absolute sovereign goodness, and be as glorious in passing by an offence, as just in punishing it. Do I not

see in man, in whom the divine majesty hath imprinted some characters of conscience and honesty, that it is more generous and noble to forgive than to revenge? And do I not see generally among men, clemency and compassion are commended above severity and rigour, though just, especially towards those who are inferior, weak, unable to resist, and have yielded themselves to mercy. Now, shall I not much more apprehend that of God which I admire in a sinful man? Shall not that be most perfect in him which is but a maimed and broken piece of his image in lost man? Certainly, it is the glory of God to conceal an offence as well as to publish it, and he can shew as much greatness and majesty in mercy as in justice; therefore I will wholly commit myself to him. I think a man ought to reason so, from the very natural knowledge he hath of God. But when ye have not only his name and nature published, but his word and promise so often proclaimed, himself come under some tye to receive and accept graciously all sinners that fly in under the shadow of his wings of mercy; then, O with how much persuasion and boldness should we come to him, and lay open our sins before him, who not only may pardon them, and not only is likely to do it, seeing he hath a gracious nature, but certainly will pardon them, cannot but do it, because his faithfulness requireth it! Certainly, he hath superadded his word to his name, his promise to his nature, to confirm our faith, and give us ample ground of strong consolation.

There is another more suitable notion about the justice of God, in forgiving sin, which hath some truth in the thing itself, but whether it be imported here, I dare not certainly affirm. Some take his faithfulness in relation to his word of promise, and his justice in relation to the price and ransom paid by Christ, importing as much as this,—whatever sinner comes to God in Christ, confessing his own guiltiness in sincerity, and supplicating for pardon, he cannot in justice refuse to give it out unto them, since he hath taken complete satisfaction of Christ. When

a sinner seeks a discharge of all sin, by virtue of that blood, the Lord is bound by his own justice to give it out and to write a free remission to them; since he is fully paid, he cannot but discharge us, and cancel our bonds. So then a poor sinner that desires mercy, and would forsake sin, hath a twofold ground to suit this forgiveness upon—Christ's blood, and God's own word, Christ's purchase and payment, and the Father's promise; he is just and righteous, and therefore he cannot deny the one, nor yet take two satisfactions, two payments for one debt; and he is faithful, so he cannot but stand to the other, that is, his promise, and thus is forgiveness ascertained and assured unto the confessing sinner. If any would take this in relation to confession, as if it reflected upon that which preceded; and the meaning should be, if any man confess his sin, he is just to requite his confession with remission,—he cannot in righteousness deny one that deserves it so well, he is just to return some suitable recompense to such a humble confession; this sense were a perverting of the whole gospel, and would overturn the foundations of grace: for there is no connection between our confession and his remission, but that which the absolute good pleasure of his will hath made; besides, that repentance is as free grace given from the exalted Prince, as remission of sins is.

## XIX.

1 John i. 9, 10.—If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, &c.

AND who will not confess their sin, say you? Who doth not confess sins daily, and, therefore, who is not forgiven and pardoned? But stay, and consider the matter again; take not this upon your first light apprehensions, which in religion are commonly empty, vain, and superficial; but search the scriptures, and your own hearts, that



ye may know what confession means. It may be said of that external custom of confession that many of you have, that the Lord hath not required it,—“sacrifices and burnt-offerings thou wouldest not.” Some external submissions and confessions, which you take for compensation for sins and offences against God,—these, I say, are but abomination to the Lord; “but a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise,” Psal. li. 16, 17. And, “Lo, I come to do thy will, I delight in it,” Psal. xl. 7, 8. When external professions and confessions are separated from the internal contrition of the heart and godly sorrow for sin; and when both internal contrition and external profession and confession are divided from conformity, or study of conformity to God’s will, then they are in no better acceptance with God than those external sacrifices which God rejected, though he had required them, because they were disjoined from the true life of them and spiritual meaning, that is, faith in a mediator, and love to obedience. If confession flow not from some contrition of heart, there be not some inward spring of this kind, the heart, opened and unfolding its very inside before God, breaking in pieces, which makes both pain of sense, and likewise gives the clearer view of the inward parts of the heart; and if it be not joined with affection to God’s will and law, earnest love to new obedience, it is but a vain, empty, and counterfeit confession, that denies itself. I suppose, a man that confesses sin which he feels not, or forsakes not, in so doing, he declares that he knows not the nature of sin; he may know such an action that is commonly called sin, and, it may be, is ashamed and censured among men, and therefore he confesseth it; but while he confesseth it without sense or feeling, he declares that he takes it not up as sin, hath not found the vileness and loathsomeness of the nature of it, nor beheld it as it is a violation of the most high Lord’s laws, and a provocation of his glorious holiness. Did a soul view it thus, as it is represented in God’s sight, as it dishonours that glorious Majesty, and hath manifest rebellion in it against

him, and as it defiles and pollutes our spirits; he could not, I say, thus look upon it, but he would find some inward soul-aborrence and displicence at it, and himself too. How monstrous would it make him in his own sight? It could not but affect the heart, and humble it in secret before God; whereas your forced and strained confessions made in public, they are merely taken on then, and proceed from no inward principle. There is no shadow of any soul-humiliation in secret, but as some use to put on sackcloth when they come to make that profession, and put it off when they go out, so you put on a habit of confession in public, and put it off you when you go out of the congregation. To lie mourning before the Lord, in your secret retirements,—that you are strangers to. But I wonder how you should thus mock God, that you will not be as serious and real in confessing as in sinning. Will you sin with the whole man, and confess only with the mouth? Will ye act sin with delight, and not confess it with a true sorrow that indeed affects the heart? Now, do you honour God by confessing, when the manner of it declares, that you feel not the bitterness of sin, and conceive not the holiness and righteousness of God, whom you have to do withal? Even so, when you confess sin, which you do not forsake, you in so far declare that you know not sin, what it is you confess, and so, that you have mocked him who will not be mocked; for, what a mockery is it, to confess those faults which we have no solid effectual purpose to reform! To vomit up your sins by confession, that we may with more desire and lust lick up the vomit again, and to pretend to wash, for nothing else, but to return to the puddle, and defile again! My brethren, “out of the same fountain comes not bitter water and sweet,” James iii. 11. Since that which ordinarily proceeds from you is bitter, unsavory to God and man, carnal, earthly, and sensual, your ways are a displayed banner against God’s will, then lay your account, all your professions and acknowledgments are of the same nature,—they are but a little more sugared over,

and their inward nature is not changed, as unacceptable to God, as your sins are.

I would give you some characters out of the text, to discover unto you the vanity and emptiness of your ordinary confessions. The confession of sin must be particular, universal, perpetual, or constant:—particular. I say, for there are many thousands who confess that they are sinners, and yet do not at all confess their sins: for, to confess sins, is to confess their own real actual guiltiness, that which they indeed have committed, or are inclined to do. So the true and sincere confession of a repenting people is expressed, 1 Kings viii. 33, “What prayer or supplication soever be made by any man, which shall know the plague of his own heart, and spread forth his hands, then hear thou in heaven, and forgive every man whose heart thou knowest.” Now consider whether or not you be thus acquainted with your own hearts and ways, as to know your particular plague and predominant sin. Are you not rather wholly strangers to yourselves, especially the plague of your hearts? There are few that keep so much as a record or register of their actions done against God’s law, or their neglects of his will; and therefore, when you are particularly posed about your sins, or the challenge of sin, you can speak nothing to that, but that you never knew one sin by another; that is, indeed, you never observed your sins, you never knew any sin, but contented yourself with the tradition you received that you were sinners; but if any man be used to reflect upon his own ways, yet generally, the most part of men are altogether strangers to their hearts; if they know any evil of themselves it is at most but something done or undone, some commission or omission, but nothing of the inward fountain of sin is discovered. I beseech you, then, do not deceive yourselves with this general acknowledgment that you are sinners, while in the mean time your real particular sins are hid from you, and you cannot choose but hide in a generality from God. Certainly, you are far from forgiveness, and that blessedness of which

David speaks, Psal. xxxii., for this belongs to the man "that hideth not his sins, in whose heart there is no guile." And this is the plainness and sincerity of the heart, rightly to discern its own plagues, and unfold them to him. David, no doubt, would at any time have confessed that he was a sinner, but mark how heavy the wrath of God was on him for all that, because he came not to a plain, ingenuous, and humble acknowledgment of his particular sins. "I confessed my sin, and mine iniquity I hid not." While you confess only in general terms, you confess others' sins rather than yours; but this is it—to descend into our own hearts, and find out our just and true accusation, our real debt, to charge ourselves as narrowly as we can, that he may discharge us fully, and forgive us freely.

Next, I say, confession must be universal, that is, of all sin, without partiality or respect to any sin. I doubt if a man can truly repent of any sin, except he in a manner repent of all sin; or truly forsake one sin, except there be a divorcement of the heart from, and forsaking of all sin; therefore the apostle saith, "If we confess our sins," not sin simply, but sins, taking in all the body and collection of them; for it is opposed to that, "if we say we have no sin," &c. Then there lies a necessity upon us to confess what we have; we have all sin, and so should confess all sins. Now, my meaning is not, that it is absolutely necessary that a soul come to the particular knowledge and acknowledgment of all his sins, whether of ignorance or infirmity; nay, that it is not possible; for "who can understand his errors?" saith David; "cleanse thou me from secret sins," Psal. xix 12. There are many sins of ignorance, that we know not to be sins, and many escapes of infirmity, that we do not advert to, which otherwise we might know. Now, I do not impose that burden on a soul, to confess every individual sin of that kind; but this certainly must be,—there must be such a discovery of the nature of sin, and the loathsomeness of it in God's sight, and the heinous guilt of it, as may abase

and humble the soul in his presence; there must be some distincter and clearer view of the dispositions and lusts of the heart, than men attain generally unto; and, withal, a discovery of the holy and spiritual meaning of God's law, which may unfold a multitude of transgressions, that are hid from the world, and make sin to abound in a man's sight and sense—"for when the law enters, sin abounds;" and to close up this, as there are many sins now discovered unto such a soul, which lay hid before, "the light having shined in upon the darkness," and, above all, the desperate wickedness of the heart is presented; so there is no sin known and discerned, but there is an equal impartial sorrow for it, and indignation against it. As a believer hath respect to all God's commands, and loves to obey them, so the penitent soul hath an impartial hatred of all sin, even the dearest and most beloved idol, and desires unfeignedly to be rid of it. Hence your usual public confessions of sin are wiped out of the number of true and sincere confessions because you pretend to repent of one sin, and in the mean time, neither do ye know a multitude of other sins that prevail over you, nor do you mourn them, nor forsake them. Nay, you do not examine yourselves that way, to find out the temper of your hearts, or tenor and course of your ways. You pretend to repent for drunkenness, or such like, and yet you are ordinary cursers, swearers, liars, railers, neglecters of prayer, profaners of the Sabbath and such like, and these you do not withal mourn for. In sum, he that mourns only for the sin that men censure, knoweth and confesseth no sin sincerely. If you would indeed return unto God from some gross evils, you must be divorced in your affections from all sin.

Then this confession should be perpetuated and continued as long as we are in this life, for that is imported by comparing this verse with those it stands between. "If we say we have no sin," if we say at any time, while we are in this life, if we we imagine or dream of any such perfection here, "we lie." Now, what should we do then

since sin is always lodging in our mortal bodies, during this time of necessary abode beside an ill neighbour? What should be our exercise? Even this,—confess your sins, confess. I say, as long as you have them, draw out this the length of that. Be continually groaning to him under that body of death, and mourning under your daily infirmities and failings. That stream of corruption runs continually,—let the stream of your contrition and confession run as incessantly; and there is another stream of Christ's blood, that runs constantly too, to cleanse you. Now, herein is the discovery of the vanity and deceitfulness of many of your confessions, public and private; the current of them soon dries up, there is no perpetuity or constancy in them, no daily humbling or abasing yourselves, but all that is, is by fits and starts, upon some transient convictions, or outward censures and rebukes; and thus men quickly cover and bury their sins in oblivion and security and forget what manner of persons they were. They are not under a daily impartial examination of their ways, take notice of nothing but some solemn and gross escapes, and these are but a short time under their view.

Now, let us apply a little to the encouragement of poor souls, who being inwardly burdened with the weight of their own guiltiness, exoner themselves by confession in his bosom. As you have two suits, and two desires to him,—one, that your sins may be forgiven, another, that they may be subdued; so he hath two solemn engagements and ties to satisfy you—one to forgive your sins, and another to cleanse you from all unrighteousness. The soul that is truly penitent, is not only desirous of pardon of sin,—that is not the chief or only design of such a soul in application to Christ,—but it is withal to be purified from sin and all unrighteousness, and to have ungodly lusts cleansed away. And herein is the great probation of such an one's reality—it will not suffice or satisfy such an one, to be assured of delivery from wrath and 'condemnation, but he must likewise be redeemed from sin, that it hath no dominion over him. He desires to be freed from death,

that he may have his "conscience withal purged from dead works, to serve the living God," Heb. ix. 14. He would have sin blotted out of an accusing conscience, that it may be purged out of the affections of the heart, and he would have his sins washed away, for this end especially, that he may be "washed from his sins," Rev. i. 5. Now, as this is the great desire and design of such a heart, in which there is no guile, to have sin purified and purged out of us, as well as pardoned, so there is a special tye and obligation upon God our Father, by promise, not only to pardon sin, but to purge from sin; not only to cover it with the garment of Christ's righteousness, and the breadth of his infinite love, but also to cleanse it by his Spirit effectually applying that blood to the purifying of the heart. Now, where God hath bound himself voluntarily, and out of love, do not ye loose him by unbelief, for that will bind you into a prison: but labour to receive these gracious promises, and to take him bound as he offers. Believe, I say, that he will both forgive you, and in due time will cleanse you heart from the love and delight of sin. Believe his promise, and engagement by promise to both, and this will set a seal to his truth and faithfulness. There is nothing in God to affright a sinner, but his justice, holiness, and righteousness; but unto thee who, in the humble confession of thy sins, fliest into Jesus Christ, that very thing which did discourage thee, may now encourage and imbolden thee to come, for "he is just and faithful to forgive sins." His justice being now satisfied, is engaged that way to forgive, not to punish.

## XX.

1 John i. 10.—If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

THERE is nothing in which religion more consists, than in the true and unfeigned knowledge of ourselves. The

heathens supposed that sentence, *γνώθι σεαυτὸν*, “know thyself,” descended from heaven. It was indeed the motto of the wisest and most religious amongst them. But certain it is, that the true and sincere understanding of ourselves descends from “the Father of lights,” and is as great a gift as man is capable of, next to the knowledge of God himself. There is nothing more necessary to man, either as man or as a Christian, either as endowed with reason or professing religion, than that he should be thoroughly acquainted with himself, his own heart, its dispositions, inclinations, and lusts, his ways and actions; that while he travels abroad to other creatures and countries, he may not commit so shameful an absurdity, as to be a stranger at home, where he ought to be best acquainted. Yet how sad is it, that this which is so absolutely needful and universally profitable, should be lying under the manyest difficulties in the attainment of it? So that there is nothing harder, than to bring a man to a perfect understanding of himself:—what a vile, haughty, and base creature he is—how defiled and desperately wicked his nature—how abominable his actions; in a word, what a compound of darkness and wickedness he is—a heap of defiled dust, and a mass of confusion—a sink of impiety and iniquity, even the best of mankind, those of the rarest and most refined extraction, take them at their best estate. Thus they are as sepulchres painted without, and putrified within—outwardly adorned, and within all full of rottenness and corruption: “the imagination of his heart only evil continually.” Now, I say, here is the great business and labour of religion,—to bring a man to the clear discerning of his own nature,—to represent unto him justly his own image, as it is painted in the word of God, and presented in the glass of the law; and so by such a surprising monstrous appearance, to affect his heart to self-aborrency in dust and ashes, and to have this representation, however unpleasant, yet most profitable, continually observant to our minds, that we may not forget what manner of persons we are. Truly, I



may say, if there be a perfection in this estate of imperfection. herein it consists; and if there be any attainment of a Christian, I account this the greatest,—to be truly sensible of himself, and vile in his own eyes.

It was the custom of Philip, king of Macedonia, after he had overcome the famous republic of Greece, to have a young man to salute him first every morning with these words, *Phillipe homo es*,—Philip, thou art a man; to the end that he might be daily minded of his mortality, and the unconstancy of human affairs, lest he should be puffed up with his victory; and this was done before any could have access to speak with him, as if it were to season and prepare him for the actions of the day. But O how much more ought a Christian to train up his own heart and accustom it this way, to be his continual remembrancer of himself; to suggest continually to his mind, and whisper this first into his ear in the morning, and mid-day, and evening,—*peccator es*, thou art a sinner; to hold our own image continually before us, in prayer and praises, in restraints, in liberties of spirit, in religious actions, and in all our ordinary conversation, that it might salt and season all our thoughts, words, and deeds, and keep them from that ordinary purification and corruption of pride and self-conceit, which maketh all our ointment stink.

“If we say we have no sin, we make him a liar.” Why is this repeated again, but to shew unto us, even to you Christians who believe in Christ, and are washed in his blood, how hard it is to know ourselves aright? If we speak of the grosser sort of persons, they scarce know any sin, nor the nature and vileness of any that they know; therefore they live in security and peace, and bless themselves in their own hearts, as if they had no sin. For such, I say, I shall only say unto them, that your self-deceiving is not so subtil, but it may soon be discerned: your lie is gross, and quickly seen through. But I would turn myself to you Christians, who are in some measure acquainted with yourselves; yet there is something against you from this word. After ye have

once got some peace from the challenge of sin, and hope of pardon, you many times fall out of acquaintance with yourselves. Having attained, by the Lord's grace, to some restraint of the more visible outbreakings of sin, you have not that occasion to know yourselves by ; and so you remain strangers to your hearts, and fall into better liking with yourselves, than the first sight of yourselves permitted you. Now, my beloved in the Lord, herein you are to be blamed, that you do not rather go to the fountain, and there behold the streams, than only to behold the fountain in the streams. You ought rather, upon the Lord's testimony of man, to believe what is in you, before you find it, and see it breaking out ; and keep this character continually in your sight, which will be more powerful to humble you than many outbreakings. I think we should be so well acquainted with our own natures, as to account nothing strange to them that we see abroad ; but rather think all the grossness and wickedness of men suitable and correspondent to our spirits,—to that root of bitterness that is in them. The goodness of God in restraining the appearance of that in us, which is within us in reality, should rather increase the sense of our own wickedness, than diminish it in our view.

Indeed, self-love is that which blinds us, and bemists us in the sight of ourselves. We look upon ourselves through this false medium, and it represents all things more beautiful than they are ; and therefore the apostle hath reason to say, " We deceive ourselves, and we make God a liar." O how much practical self-conceit is there in the application of truth ! There are many errors contrary to the truths themselves, and many deceivers and deceived, who spread them ; but I believe there are more errors committed by men in the application of truths to their own hearts, than in the contemplation of them ; and more self-deceiving than deceiving of others. It is strange to think, how sound, clear, and distinct a man's judgment will be against those evils in others, which yet he seeth not in himself ; how many Christians will be able

to decipher the nature of some vices, and unbowel the evils of them, and be quick-sighted to espy the least appearance of them in another, and to condemn it; and yet so partial are they in judging themselves — self-love so pur-blinds them in this reflection, that they cannot discern that in themselves, which others cannot but discern! How often do men declaim against pride, and covetousness, and self-seeking, and other evils of that kind? They will pour out a flood of eloquence and zeal against them; and yet it is strange they do not advert, that they are accusing themselves, and impannelling themselves in such discourses, though others, it may be, will easily perceive a predominancy of these evils in them. “Who art thou, O man, who judgeth another, and doest the same thing? Canst thou escape God’s judgment?” Rom. ii. 1. Consider this, O Christian, that thou mayest learn to turn the edge of all thy censures and convictions against thyself, that thou mayest prevent all men’s judgments of thee, in judging thyself of all things that men can judge thee, that is, a chief of sinners, that hath the root of all sin in thee; and so thou mayest anticipate the divine judgment too, “for if we judge ourselves, we shall not be judged.” Labour thou to know those evils that are incident to thy nature, before others can know them, that is, in the root and fountain, before they come to the fruit and stream; to know sins in the first conceptions of them, before they come to such productions as are visible; and this shall keep thee humble, and preserve thee from much sin, and thou shalt not deceive thyself, nor dishonour God, in making him a liar, but rather set to thy seal to this truth, “and his word shall abide in thee.”

There is a common rule that we have in judging ourselves, by comparing ourselves amongst ourselves, which, as Paul saith, “is not wisdom,” 2 Cor. x. 12. When we do not measure ourselves by the perfect rule of God’s holy word, but parallel ourselves with other persons, who are still defective from the rule, far further from it than any one is from another: this is the ordinary method of judg-

ing of self-love. We compare with the worst persons; and if we be not so bad as they, we think ourselves good. If not so ignorant as some are, we presume that we know; if not so profane as many, we believe ourselves religious. "Lord, I am not as this publican," so say many in their hearts,—there is a curser, a swearer, a drunkard, a blind ignorant soul, that neglects prayer in private and public, and upon these ruins of other sins, they build some better estimation of themselves. But, I pray you, what will that avail you, to be unlike them, if you be more unlike your pattern than they are unlike you? It must be, others will compare with those that are good, but it is with that which is worst in them, and not that which is best. How often do men reckon this way,—here is a good man, here is an eminent person, yet he is such and such, subject to such infirmity, and here self-love flatters itself, and, by flattering, deceives itself. My beloved, let us learn to establish a more perfect rule, which may shew all our imperfections. Let our rule ascend, that our hearts may descend in humility. But when our rule and pattern descends to men of like infirmities, then our pride and self-conceit ascends; and the higher we be that way in our own account, the lower we are indeed, and in God's account; and the lower we be in ourselves we lose nothing by it: for, as God is higher in our account, so we are higher in God's account, according to that standing rule, Matth. xxiii. 12, "Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased, and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted."

## XXI.

1 John ii. 1.—My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, &c.

THE gospel is an entire uniform piece; all the parts of it are interwoven through other, and interchangeably knit together, so that there can be no dividing of it any more than of Christ's coat that was without seam. If you have it not altogether by the divine lot, you cannot truly have any part of it, for they are so knit together, that if you disjoin them, you destroy them; and if they cease to be together, they cease altogether to be. I speak this, because there may be pretensions to some abstracted parts of Christianity. One man pretends to faith in Jesus Christ, and persuasion of pardon of sin, and in this there may be some secret glorifying arising from confidence; another may pretend to the study of holiness and obedience, and may endeavour something that way to do known duties, and abstain from gross sins. Now, I say, if the first do not conjoin the study of the second; and if the second do not lay down the first as the foundation, both of them embrace a shadow for the thing itself, because they separate those things that God hath joined, and so can have no being but in men's fancy, when they are not conjoined. He that would pretend to a righteousness of Christ, without him, must withal study to have the righteousness of the law fulfilled within him; and he that endeavours to have holiness within must withal go out of himself, to seek a righteousness without him, whereupon to build his peace and acceptance with God; or else, neither of them hath truly any righteousness without them, to cover them, or holiness within, to cleanse them. Now, here the beloved apostle shews us this divine contexture of the gospel. The great and comprehensive end and design of

the gospel is, peace in pardon of sin, and purity from sin: "These things I write unto you, that you sin not," &c. The gospel is comprised in commands and promises; both make one web, and link in together. The immediate end of the command is, "that we sin not;" nay, but there is another thing always either expressly added, or tacitly understood—"but if any man sin," that desires not to sin, "we have an advocate with the Father." So the promise comes in as a subsidiary help to all the precepts. It is annexed to give security to a poor soul from despair; and therefore the apostle teacheth you a blessed art of constructing all the commands and exhortations of the gospel, those of the highest pitch, by supplying the full sense with this happy and seasonable caution or caveat, "but if any man sin," &c. Doth that command, "Be ye holy as I am holy, perfect as your heavenly Father," which sounds so much unattainable perfection, and seems to hold forth an inimitable pattern; doth it, I say, discourage thee? Then use the apostle's art, add this caution to the command, subjoin this sweet exceptive. "But if any man," that desires to be holy, and gives himself to this study, "fail often," and 'fall' and defile himself with unholiness, let him not despair, but know, that "he hath an advocate with the Father." If that of Paul's urge thee, "present your bodies a living sacrifice, and be not conformed to the world, but transformed, and glorify God in your bodies and spirits, which are his," Rom. xii. 1, 2, and 1 Cor. vi. 20;—and, "cleanse yourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit," 2 Cor. vii. 1;—and, "walk in the Spirit, and walk as children of the light," &c.;—if these do too rigorously exact upon thee, so as to make thee lose thy peace, and weaken thy heart and hands, learn to make out a full sentence, and fill up the full sense and meaning of the gospel, according as you see it done here. "But if any man,"—whose inward heart-desires, and chief designs are toward these things; who would think himself happy in holiness and conformity to God, and estimates his blessedness or misery, from his union

or separation from God,—“sin,” then “we have an advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ the righteous,” who hath all that we want, and will not suffer any accusation to fasten upon us, “as long as he lives to make intercession for us.”

On the other hand, take a view of the promises of the gospel; though the immediate, and next end of them is, to give peace to troubled souls, and settle us in the high point of our acceptance with God, yet certainly, they have a further end, even a purity from sin, as well as pardon of sin, cleansing from all sin and filthiness, as well as covering of filthiness. “Th se things I write unto you, that ye sin not.” What things? Consider what goes before, and what follows after, even the publication of the word of life, and eternal life in him, the declaration of our fellowship with God in Christ, the offering of the blood of Christ, able to cleanse all sin, the promise of pardon to the penitent, confession of sin,—“all these things I write, that ye sin not;” so that this seems to be the ultimate end and chief design of the gospel, unto which all tends, unto which all work together. The promises are for peace and peace is for purity; the promises are for faith, and faith is for purifying of the heart, and performing the precepts, so that, all at length returns to this, from whence, while we swerved, all this misery is come upon us. In the beginning it was thus.—man was created to glorify God, by obedience to his blessed will; sin interposeth and marreth the whole frame, and from this hath a flood of misery flowed in upon us. Well, the gospel comes offering a Saviour, and forgiveness in him. Thus peace is purchased, pardon granted, the soul is restored unto its primitive condition and state of subordination to God’s will; and so redemption ends where creation began, or rather in a more perfect frame of the same kind. The second Adam builds what the first Adam broke down, and the Son re-creates what the Father in the beginning created, yea, with some addition. In this new edition of mankind, all seems new—“new heavens, and new earth;”

and that because the creature that was made old, and defiled with sin, is made new by grace. Now, hence you may learn the second part of this lesson that the apostle teaches us; as ye ought to correct, as it were, precepts of the gospel, by subjoining promises in this manner, so ye ought to direct promises towards the performance of his precepts, as their chief end. Whensoever you read it written, "The blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin;"—"If we confess, he is faithful to forgive our sins;"—"God so loved the world that he gave his Son;"—"He that believeth hath everlasting life," &c.—then make up the entire sense and meaning, after this manner, "These things are written that we sin not." Is there a redemption from wrath published? Is there reconciliation with God preached? And are we beseeched to come and have the benefit of them? Then say, and supply within thine own, "These things are written, published, and preached, that we may not sin." Look to the furthest end of these things, it is, "that we sin not." The end of things, the scope of writings, and the purpose of actions, is the very measure of them, and so that is the best interpreter of them. The scope of Scripture is by all accounted the very thread that will lead a man right in and out of the labyrinths that are in it. And so it is used as the rule of the interpretation in the parts of it. Now, my beloved in the Lord, take here the scope of the whole Scriptures, the mark that all the gospel shoots at, "These things I write unto you, that ye sin not." You hear, it is true, of "pardon of sin, of delivery from wrath, of not coming into condemnation, of covering offences, of blotting them out as a cloud;" all these you read and hear; but what do they all aim at? If you consider not that attentively, you shall no more understand the plain gospel, than you can expound a parable without observing the scope of it. Do you think these have no further aim, than to give you peace, and to secure you from fears and terrors, that you may then walk as you list, and follow the guiding of your own hearts? Nay, if you take it so, you totally mistake it. If you do not read



on, and find all these things written to this end, "that we sin not, you err, not understanding," or misunderstanding, "the Scriptures."

"These things I write unto you, little children." To enforce this the more sweetly, he useth this affectionate compellation, "little children," for in all things affection hath a mighty stroke, almost as much as reason. It is the most suitable way to prevail with the spirit of a man, to deal in love and tenderness with it; it insinuates more sweetly, and so can have less resistance, and therefore works more strongly. It is true, another way of terrors, threatenings, and reproofs, mingled with sharp and heavy words of challenges, may make a great deal of more noise, and yet it hath not such virtue to prevail with a rational soul. The Spirit of the Lord was not in the wind, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire, but in the still and calm voice which came to Elijah, 1 Kings xix. 11, 12. These suit not the gentle, dove-like disposition of the Spirit; and though they be fit to rend rocks in pieces, yet they cannot truly break hearts, and make them contrite. The sun will make a man sooner part with his cloak than the wind; such is the difference between the warm beams of affection, and the boisterous violence of passions or terror. Now, O that there were such a spirit in them who preach the gospel, such a fatherly affection, that with much pity and compassion they might call sinners from the ways of death! O there is no subject, in which a man may have more room for melting affections, nothing that will admit of such bowels of compassion as this,—the multitude of souls posting to destruction, and so blindfolded they cannot see it! Here the fountain of tears might be opened to run abundantly. The Lord personates a tender-hearted father or husband often, "Oh, why will ye die? Ye have broken my heart with your whorish heart: O Jerusalem, how oft would I, but thou wouldst not?" When he, who is not subject to human passions, expresseth himself thus, how much more doth it become us poor creatures to have pity on our

fellow-creatures? Should it not press out from us many groans, to see so many perishing, even beside salvation. I wish you would take it so, that "the warning you to flee from the wrath to come," is the greatest act of favour and love that can be done to you. It becomes us to be solicitous about you, and declare unto you, that you will meet with destruction in those paths in which you walk; that "these ways go down to the chambers of death." O that it might be done with so much feeling compassion of your misery, as the necessity of it requires! But, why do many of you take it so hard to be thus forewarned, and have your danger declared unto you? I guess at the reason of it. You are in a distemper as sick children distempered in a fever, who are not capable of discerning their parents' tender affection, when it crosseth their own inclinations and ways.

## XXII.

1 John ii. 1.—My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not: And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, &c.

"CHRIST Jesus came by water and by blood, not by water only, but by blood also," and I add, not by blood only, but by water also, chap. v. 6. In sin there is the guilt binding over to punishment, and there is the filth or spot that defileth the soul in God's sight. To take away guilt, nothing so fit as blood: for there is no punishment beyond blood; therefore saith the apostle, "without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin," Heb. ix. 22; and for the stain and spot, nothing is so suitable as water, for that is generally appointed for cleansing. And some shadow of this the heathens had, who had their lustrations in water, and their expiations by blood; but more significantly and plainly, the Jews, who had their purifications by sprinkling of water, Numb. viii. 7. and expiations by sacrificing of slain beasts. But all these were but

evanishing shadows; now the substance is come, "Jesus Christ is come in water and blood;" in water, to cleanse the spots of the soul, to purify it from all filthiness; and in blood, to satisfy for sin, and remove the punishment. You have both in these words of the apostle, for he labours to set out unto us the true Christ, whole and entire, "these things I write unto you, that ye sin not." Here is the proper end of the water—and "if any man sin, we have Christ a propitiation for our sins." Here is the blood—the end of the blood is to save us, the end of the water is that we sin not, since we are saved. He came in the blood of expiation, because we had sinned; he came in the water of sanctification, that we might not sin. His blood speaks peace to the soul, and the water subjoins, "but let them not return to folly." His blood cries, "behold thou art made whole," and the water echoes unto it, "sin no more, lest a worse thing befall thee," John v. 14. These two streams of water and blood, which are appointed for purity and pardon, run intermingled all along, and so the proper effects of them are interchangeably attributed to either of them; "he hath washed us in his blood," Rev. i. 5; and vii. 14. "And the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin." Then, certainly, this blood cannot be without water, it is never separated from it. The proper effect of blood is to cover sin; but because the water runs in that channel, and is conveyed by the blood thither, therefore it doth cleanse sin, as well as cover it.

"These things I write unto you, that ye sin not." This then is the design of the whole gospel, the great and grand design,—to destroy sin, and save the sinner. There is a treaty of peace made with the sinner, and "Christ is the peace-maker." A tender of life and salvation is made to him, but there is no treaty, no capitulation or composition with sin; out it must go, first out of its dominion, then out of its habitation. It must first lose its power, and then its being in a believer. Yea, this is one of the chief articles of our peace, not only required of us as our duty, that we should destroy that which cannot but destroy us;

for, if any man will needs hug and embrace his sins, and cannot part with them, he must needs die in their embracements, because the council of heaven hath irrevocably passed a fatal sentence against sin, as the only thing that in all the creation hath the most perfect opposition to his blessed will, and contrariety to his holy nature,—but also, and especially, as the great stipulation and promise upon his part, “to redeem us from all our iniquities, and purify us to himself, a people zealous of good works;” and not only to redeem us from hell, and deliver us from wrath, Tit. ii 14. He hath undertaken this great work, to compece this mutiny and rebellion that was raised up in the creation by sin, else what peace could be between God and us, as long as his enemy and ours dwelt in our bosom, and we at peace with it.

Now, take a short view of these things that are written in the preceding chapter, and you shall see that the harmonious voice of all that is in the gospel, is this, “that we sin not.” Let me say further, as “these things are written that we sin not,” so all things are done “that we sin not.” Take all the whole work of creation, of providence, of redemption,—all of them speak one language, “that we sin not.” “Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge: there is no speech or language where their voice is not heard,” Psalm xix. 2, 3. And, as in that place, their voice proclaims the glory, majesty, and goodness of God, so they, with the same sound, proclaim and declare, that we should not sin against such a God, so great, and so good. All that we see suggests and insinuates this into our hearts; all that we hear whispers this unto our ears, “that we sin not, that he made us, and not we ourselves, and that we are the very work of his hands.” This speaks our absolute and essential dependence on him, and therefore proclaims with a loud voice, that sin, which would cut off this subordination, and loose from this dependence upon his holy will, is a monstrous unnatural thing. Take all his mercies towards us, whether general or particular, the

transcendant abundance of his infinite goodness in the earth, that river of his riches that runs through it, to water every man, and brings supply to his doors, that infinite variety that is in heaven and earth, and all of them of equal birth-right with man ; yet by the law of our Maker, a yoke of subjection and service to man is imposed upon them, so that man is, in a manner, set in the centre of all, to the end, that all the several qualifications and perfections that are in every creature, may centre and meet together in him, and flow towards him. Look upon all his particular acts of care and favour towards thee, consider his judgments upon the world, upon the nation, or thine own person. Put to thine ear, and hear, this is the joint harmonious melody, this is the proclamation of all, “that we sin not, that we sin not against so good a God,” and so “great a God.” That were wickedness, this were madness. If he wound, it is “that we sin not:” if he heal again, it is “that we sin not.” Doth he kill?—it is “that we sin not!” Doth he make alive?—it is for the same end. Doth he shut up and restrain our liberty, either by bondage, or sickness, or other afflictions ; why?—he means “that we sin not.” Doth he open again?—he means the same thing, “that we sin no more, lest a worse thing befall us.” Doth he make many to fall in battle, and turn the fury of that upon us?—the voice of it is, that you who are left behind, should “sin no more.” Is there severity towards others, and towards you clemency? O the loud noise of that is, “sin not!” But alas, the result of all is, that which is written, Psal. lxxviii. 32—“Nevertheless they sinned still.” In the midst of so many concurring testimonies, in the very throng of all the sounds and voices that all the works of God utter, in the very hearing of these, nevertheless “to sin still, and not to return and inquire early after God:” this is the plague and judgment of the nation.

But let us return to the words, “these things,” &c. “That which is written of the word of life, that which was from the beginning, and was manifested unto us,” that is written “that we sin not:” For, saith this same apostle,

chap iii. 5, 8, "And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins, and in him is no sin;" yea, for this very purpose, saith he, "that he might destroy the works of the devil." Now, this is the great business, that drew the Son out of the Father's bosom,—to destroy the arch-enemy and capital rebel, sin, which, as to man, is a work of Satan's, because it first entered in man by the devil's suggestion and counsel. All that misery and ruin, all those works of darkness and death, that Satan had by his malice and policy wrought upon and in poor mankind, "Jesus was manifested in the flesh without sin, to destroy and take away sin out of our flesh, and to abolish and destroy Satan's work," which he had builded upon the ruins of God's work, of the image of God, and to repair and renew that first blessed work of God in man, Eph. iv. 23, 24.

Now, O how cogent and persuading is this; one so high, come down so low, one dwelling in inaccessible glory, manifested in the flesh, in the infirmity and weakness of it, to this very purpose, to repair the creation, to make up the breaches of it, to destroy sin, and save the sinner! What force is in this to persuade a soul that truly believes it, "not to sin!" For, may he think within himself, shall I save that which Christ came to destroy, shall I entertain and maintain that which he came to take away, and do what in me lies to frustrate the great end of his glorious and wonderful descent from heaven? Shall I join hands, and associate with my lusts, and war for them, "which war against my soul," and him that would save my soul? Nay. let us conclude, my beloved, within our own hearts, Is the word and prince of life manifested from heaven, and come to mar and unmake that work of Satan, that he may rescue me from under his tyranny? Then God forbid that I should help Satan to build up that which my Saviour is casting down, and to make a prison for myself, and cords to bind me in it for everlasting. Nay, will a believing soul say, rather let me be a "worker together with Christ." Though faintly, yet I resolve to wrestle with him, to pull down all the strong holds that Satan keeps in my nature, and so to congratulate and cor-

sent to him, who is the avenger and asserter of my liberty.

Then consider the greatest end and furthest design of the gospel, how it is inseparably chained and linked into this, "that we sin not." We are called to "fellowship with the Father and the Son," and herein is his glory, and our happiness. Now, this proclaims with a loud voice, "that we sin not;" for, what more contrary to that design of union, and communion with God, than to sin, which disunites and discommunicates the soul from God. The nature of sin you know, "it is the transgression of his law;" and so it is the very just opposition of the creature's will to the will of him that made it. Now, how do ye imagine that this can consist with true friendship and fellowship, which looseth that conjunction of wills and affections, which is the bond of true friendship, and the ground of fellowship. *Idem velle atque idem nolle, hæc demum vera amicitia est.* The conspiracy of our desires and delights in one point with God's, this sweet coincidency makes out communion; and what communion then, can there be with God, when that which his soul abhors is your delight, and his delight is not your desire? "What communion hath light with darkness?" Sin is darkness. All sin, but especially sin entertained and maintained, sin that hath the full consent of the heart, and carrieth the whole man after it, that is Egyptian darkness, an universal darkness over the soul. This being interposed between God and the soul, breaks off communion, eclipses that soul totally. Therefore, my beloved, if you do believe that you are called unto this high dignity of fellowship with God, and if your souls be stirred with some holy ambition after it, consider that "these things are written that ye sin not." Consider what baseness is in it, for one that hath such a noble design, as fellowship with the highest, to debase his soul so far and so low, as to serve sinful and fleshly lusts. There is a vileness and wretchedness in the service of sin, that any soul, truly and nobly principled, cannot but look upon it with indignation, be-

cause he can behold nothing but indignity in it. "Shall I who am a ruler," saith Nehemiah, "shall such a man as I flee? and who is there, that being as I am, would flee?" Neh. vi. 11. A Christian hath more reason. Shall such a man as I, who am born again to such a hope, and called to such a high dignity; shall I, who aim and aspire so high as fellowship with God, debase and degrade myself with the vilest servitude? Shall I defile in that puddle again, till my own clothes abhor me, who aim at so pure and so holy a society? Shall I yoke in myself with drunkards, liars, swearers, and other slaves of sin? Shall I rank myself thus, and conform myself to the world, seeing there is a noble and glorious society to incorporate with, the King of kings to converse with daily? Alas, what are these worms that sit on thrones to him? But far more, how base are these companions in iniquity, your pot companions, &c.? And what a vile society is it like that of the bottomless pit, where devils are linked together in chains?

### XXIII.

1 John ii. 1.—My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not: And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, &c.

In the gospel we have the most perfect provision against both these extremities, that souls are ready to run upon the rock of desperate distrust, and the quicksands of presumptuous wantonness. It may be said to be a well ordered covenant in all things, that hath caveated and cautioned the whole matter of our salvation, in such a way, that there is neither place for discouragement and downcasting, nor yet room for liberty in sin. There is no exemption from the obligation of God's holy law, and yet there is pardon for the breach of it, and exemption from the curse. There is no peace, no capitulation with sin, and



yet there is peace concluded with the sinner, who is, by that agreement, bound to fall out with sin. There is no dispensation for sin, and from the perfection of holiness, and yet there is an advocacy for the sinner, who aims and studies after it. So that, in sum, the whole gospel is comprised in this,—“he speaks peace to his saints, but let them not return to folly; thou art made whole, sin no more.” All that is in the gospel saith this, “that thou shouldst sin no more.” But because sin is necessarily incident, therefore all that is in the gospel speaks this further,—though ye be surprised in sin, yet believe; and this is the round in which a believer is to walk,—to turn from pardon to purity, and from pollution again to pardon, for these voices and sounds are interchanged continually. “If ye have sinned, believe in Christ the advocate and sacrifice, and, because ye have believed, sin not; but if ye be overtaken in sin yet believe.” And as this is daily renewed, so the soul’s study and endeavour in them, should be daily renewed too. If ye have sinned, despair not; if ye be pardoned, yet presume not. After sin there is hope it is true, because “there is forgiveness with him!” but after forgiveness, there must be fear to offend his goodness; “for there is forgiveness with him, that he may be feared,” Psal cxxx 4. And this is the situation I would desire my soul in,—to be placed between hope of his mercy and fear of sin, the faith of his favour and the hatred of sin, which he will not favour; and how happy were a soul to be confined within these, and kept captive to its true liberty?

I spake a little before, how those fundamental truths that are set down before, do all aim at this one mark, “that we sin not;” now I proceed. That declaration what God is, verse 5, is expressly directed to this purpose and applied, verse 6—“God is light,” and therefore “sin not,” for sin is darkness; “he is light,” for purity and beauty of holiness, and perfection of knowledge.—that “true light in which is no darkness”—that unmixed light, all homogeneous to itself,—therefore “sin not;” for that is

a work of the night, and of the darkness, that proceeds from the blindness and estrangement of your minds, and ignorance of your hearts, and it cannot but prepare and fit you for those everlasting chains of darkness. Call God what you will; name all his names, styles, and titles; spell all the characters of it, and still you may find it written at every one of them, "sin not." Is he light?—then sin not. Is he life?—then sin not; for sin will separate you from his light and life; sin will darken your souls and kill them. Is he love?—then sin not. "God is love," saith John; O then sin not against love! Hatred of any good thing is deformed; but the hatred of the beautiful image of the original love, that is monstrous. "God is love," and in his love is your life and light; then to sin against him, it is not simple disobedience, nor is it only grosser rebellion, but it hath that abominable stain of ingratitude in it. Do you read, that it is written, "he is holy," then sin not, for this is most repugnant to his holiness,—“his holy eyes cannot see it.” Therefore, if thou wouldst have him look upon thee with favour, thou must not look upon sin with favour, or entertain it with delight. Is it written, that he is great and powerful?—then sin not—that were madness. Is it written, that he is good and gracious? then it is written, that ye sin not, for that were wickedness; it were an unspeakable folly and madness, to offend so great a God, that can so easily avenge himself; and it were abominable perverseness and wickedness, to sin against so good and gracious a God, who, though he may avenge himself, yet offers pardon and peace, and beseecheth us to accept it. Is he just?—then sin not; for "he will not acquit the wicked, nor hold them guiltless,"—them who do acquit themselves, and yet hold by their sins. And is he merciful?—then, O then, sin not, because he hath acquitted thee, because he is ready to blot out thy guilt. Wilt thou sin against mercy, that must save thee? Again, is it written, "that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin?"—that is written, that ye sin not. It is true, it is written, because

ye have sinned already, that ye may know how it may be pardoned. But, moreover, it is written, "that ye sin no more," that so, more sin may be prevented, at least, deliberate continued walking in sin. So that this blood hath a twofold virtue and use, to be the greatest encouragement to a soul troubled for sin, and the chiefest argument and inducement for a soul not to sin. This medicine, or this plaster, hath two notable virtues, restorative and preservative, "to restore the bones that already are broken, through falling in sin;" and "to preserve our feet from further falling in sin." It hath a healing virtue for those bruises that are in the soul; and, besides, it is an antidote and sovereign preservative against the poison and infection of sin and the world. What motive is like this? "The Son of God shed his blood for our sins;" they cost a dear price. O how precious was the ransom! More precious than gold, and silver, and precious stones, because "the redemption of the soul is so precious, that it would have ceased for ever" without it. Now, what soul can deliberately think of this, and receive it with any affection into the heart, but he shall find the most vehement persuasion against sin? He cannot but behold the heinousness and infinite evil that is in it, which required such an infinite recompense. And can a soul on that view run to the puddle and defile again, when he sees how dearly the fountain for cleansing was purchased? Can a believing heart have such treacherous thoughts harboured within him, "to crucify afresh the Lord of glory," and, as it were, "to trample under feet his blood?" No, certainly, he that believes in this blood, cannot use it so dishonourably and basely: as it is written, "that he sin not," so he reads it, and believes it, that he may not sin, as well as because he hath sinned. Many speak of this blood, and think they apply it to the cleansing of their sin past. But it is rather that they may sin with more liberty, as if the end of vomiting up a surfeit of sin were to surfeit more; and the end of washing, were nothing else but to defile again. Certainly this blood is not for such souls.—

not one word of comfort in the word,—not one drop of hope in the blood, to those who pretend to believe in Christ's blood, and continue in sin, as fresh and lively as ever they did, nothing abated of their desires or customs. But if we confess our sins, God will forgive, say you, and this we may do at any time, and this we do daily. Nay, but saith John, "this is written that you sin not;" not to encourage you to sin. It is not recorded for this end, that you may live after your own imaginations and former customs, with security and peace, upon this presumption, that pardon is easily procurable, if I say, "God have mercy upon me," ere I die. Do not deceive yourselves, for it is written for the just contrary, "that you sin no more, and return no more to folly." If he had said, if we sin, though we confess, yet he is just to punish us, you would then be driven to desperation, and from that to a desperate conclusion. Since we must be punished, however, let us not punish ourselves here, in mortifying our flesh,—“let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die.” Die we must, let us deserve it; for where there is no hope, there is no help for reformation.

But now, when there is such an unexpected proposal of grace; when God, who is free to punish us, becomes indebted by his promise to forgive our debts, we humbly submitting to him, and confessing our guiltiness; this surprisal of clemency and moderation should, yea, certainly will, overcome any heart that truly believes it, and conquer it to his love and obedience. The more easily he forgives sin, the more hardly will a believing heart be drawn to sin. You know any ingenuous spirit will more easily be conquered by kindness and condescendency, than severity and violence. These "cords of love are the bands of a man," suited to the nature of men in whom there is any sparkle of ingenuousness remaining. How often have men been engaged and overcome by clemency and goodness, who could not be conquered by force of arms! Enemies have been made friends by this means, such power is in it to knit hearts together. Augustus,

when he was acquainted with the conspiracy of one of his chief minions, Cinna, whom he had made a friend of an enemy, by kindness and courtesy, takes the same way to make of a traitor a constant friend. He doth not punish him as he had done others, but calls for him, and declares unto him his vile ingratitude, that when he had given him life and liberty, he should conspire to take away his prince's life. Well, when he is confounded and astonished, and cannot open his mouth, saith Augustus, I give thee thy life again, first an open enemy, and now a traitor; yet from this day, let an inviolable friendship be bound up between us, and so it proved; for this way of dealing did totally overcome his heart, and blot out all seditious thoughts. But, O how incomparably greater is his condescendency and clemency, whose person is so high and sacred; whose laws are so just and holy. and we so base and wretched,—to pardon such infinite guilt, rebellion, and treachery, against such an infinite majesty; and that, when a soul doth but begin to blush, and be ashamed with itself, and cannot open its mouth! I say, this rare and unparalleled goodness, and mercy being considered, cannot but tame and daunt the wildest and most savage natures. Wild beasts are not brought into subjection and tamed, but by gentle usage. It is not fierceness and violence can cure their fierceness, but meekness and condescendency to follow their humours, and soft dealing with them. As a rod is not bowed by great strength, but broken, even so those things of the promise of pardon for sin, of the grace and readiness of God to pardon upon the easiest terms, are written for this end, that our wild and undaunted natures may be tamed, and may bow and submit willingly to the yoke of his obedience, and may henceforth knit such a sacred bond of friendship and fellowship with God, as may never be broken.

But, say ye, who is he that sins not? “Who can say, my heart is pure, and my way is clean? Who can say, I have no sin?” And therefore that cannot be expected which you crave. Nay, but saith the apostle, “These

things I write unto you, that ye sin not." Because sin is in all, therefore you excuse yourselves in your sins, and take liberty to sin. But the very contrary is the intent of the declaring unto us that we have sin; he shews that none want it, not that ye may be the more indulgent towards it, but the more watchful against it. It is not to make you secure, but rather to give you alarm. Even the best and holiest,—it is an alarm to them, to tell them that sin is *in confiniis* on their very borders, that the enemy is even in their quarters, yea, in their bosom. Certainly, this should so much the more excite us against it, and arm us for it every moment, lest either by fraud or force, by secret undermining or open violence, it draw us away from God. This word, "if we say we have no sin, we lie," is a watchword given to men, a warning to enter in consideration of themselves; for the enemy being within, there is no flying from him. We carry him about with us, and being within, he is less discerned, and therefore we ought to awake, and so walk circumspectly, with eyes in our head, lest we be surprised at unawares, either in that time we know not of, or at that place we least suspect. And to others of you, who have never attained any victory over your sins, and scarce have a discerning of them, I would only say this, that the universality of sin's inhabitation, or being in all men, even the godly, will not excuse sin's domination and reign in you. It is strange, that since the holiest have need of continual watching against this bosom enemy, that ye who have both little knowledge and strength, should think ye may live securely, and not trouble yourselves. If they have need to take heed, how much more have ye, since it is but in them, but it reigns in you?

## XXIV.

1 John ii. 1.—And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, &c.

THERE is here a sad supposition, but too certain, that any man may sin; yea, that all men will sin, even those who have most communion with God, and interest in the blood of Christ. Yet they are not altogether exempted from this fatal lot of mankind. It is incident even to them to sin, and too frequently incident: Lut yet we have a happy and sweet provision, for indemnity from the hazard of sin,—“we have an advocate with the Father.” Grant the probability, yea, the necessity and certainty of that supposal, “if any man do sin,” yet there is as much certainty of indemnity from sin, as of necessity of falling into sin. It is not more sure, that we shall carry about with us matter of sorrow or mourning; but that it is as sure, that we have always without us matter of rejoicing.

Let me then speak a word to these particulars: *First*, That sin is incident to the best, even after all persuasions, convictions, resolutions, desires, and designs to avoid sin; *next*, That it is usual for sins after mercy, convictions, and resolution, to appear so heinous, that they may seem to overtop the mercy of God, and the merits of Christ; a soul is most apt to be troubled with guilt contracted after pardon, and a desire of purity. But withal, I would, in the *last* place, represent to you, that there is no ground of despair or discouragement for such an one, though there be ground of humiliation and mourning. There is a provision made in the gospel against these continually incident fears; there is a security against the hazard of surprising sins; and, that this comfort belongs only to such souls as unfeignedly desire not to sin, and are in some measure persuaded by the grace of God not to sin, not to

those who willingly give up themselves to their own lusts. It is as common a doctrine as any, that sin hath some lodging in every man's heart and flesh, and is not totally cast out, but only bound with chains within, that it do not exercise its old dominion over a believer. But I fear, the most common truths, though they be most substantial in themselves, yet are but circumstantial in our apprehensions, and very rarely and extraordinarily have place in the deeper and more serious thoughts of our hearts. They are commonly confessed, it is true, but as seldom considered, I am sure; for who did truly ponder the inclineableness of our nature to sin, the strong propension of the heart to evil, the deceitfulness of sin itself, and the many circumstantial helps and additions it gets to its strength, but he would stand in awe, and watch seriously over himself. I dare say, many sin, rather because of a misapprehended immunity from it, and a misreckoning of their own measure and strength, than because of the strength of sin itself. I know no one thing makes sin so strong as this,—that we do not apprehend our own weakness, and so give over watchfulness, which is the greatest and best part of our armour of defence, when it is done in faith, and this watch kept on the tower of the Lord's promises. The apprehension of our escaping the pollutions of the world, and of some strength to resist them: this adds no more strength to us, but diminisheth and taketh from our vigilance, and so exposeth us, as it were, naked and secure, to the cruelty of our adversary. I would wish every Christian to be thoroughly acquainted, and often conversant in two books of sophistry, I may so term them.—“The deceitfulness of his own heart, and the deceivableness of sin,” Jer. xvii. and Heb. iii. 13. These are the volumes he would daily turn over, to learn to discern the sophistications, self-flatteries, blindness, darkness, and self-love of his own heart; to take off the deceiving mask of pretences and appearances of good, and behold sensibly the true and real inclinations of the heart to wickedness, to passion, pride, uncleanness, malice, envy, and all those affections of the flesh;—to find



out the true beating of the pulse of the heart. And indeed this just discerning and discovery of the thief in the soul, is a great part of his arraignment; for if sin lie under the view of an eye that hates it, and loves God, much of its power and virtue, which lie in darkness, is taken away. I press this the more, because I verily apprehend it to be the plague of many Christians, who have some general insight into the matter of good and evil, and espy some more gross corruption in themselves, and have some affection to good; yet this estrangedness to our own hearts, and the vein or strain of them, the not unbowelling of our hidden affections, and not discerning of the poison of pride, self-love, love of the world, and such like lusts, which are intermingled in all that we do, and spread, as it were, universally through the whole man; this, I say, makes most of us be subject to so many surprisals by sin. We are often rooted before we draw up; and often conquered ere we consider. This makes us such unproficients in mortification, so that scarce any sin is killed, while the roots of all sin lie hid under the ground from us. Then withal, I desire you to study how deceivable a thing sin is,—how many deceitful fair pretences it is covered with. “It hath the voice of Jacob, but the hands of Esau.” Look, what it is that is pleasant or suitable to our natural spirits,—it insinuates itself always under the shadow of that; and if there be not much heedfulness and attention, and much experience of the wiles of that subtle one, it is a great hazard to be caught with it unadvisedly, while we clasp about another thing, which is presented as a bait and allurement. Now, is it any wonder that a poor soul be drawn to sin often, when our enemy doth not for the most part profess hostility, but friendship, and under that colour pleads admission within our ports? [*i. e.* gates.] And, besides, we have a treacherous friend in our bosom, that betrays us into his hands; that is, our own deceitful hearts. These things I mention to put you in remembrance of what condition you are in in this world, and what posture you should be in. “Watch, I say, and

when ye have done all, stand with your loins girt ;” and though you cannot possibly escape all sin, yet certainly it is not in vain thus to set against it, and keep a watch over it, for by this means you shall escape more sin, and sin less. As he that aims at the mark, though he do not hit it, yet he shall ordinarily come nearer it, than he that shoots only at random ; and as the army that is most vigilant and watchful, though they cannot prevent all losses and hazards, yet commonly are not found at such a loss, as those who are proud, confident, and secure.

Now, as it is supposed, that sin is ordinarily incident to the child of God, so it is especially to be caveated, that he despair not in his sins ; for it is imported in this provision, that the believer is in great hazard upon new lapses into sin, either of daily incursion, or of a grosser nature, to be discouraged. As there is so much corruption in any man’s heart, as will “turn the grace of God into wantonness,” and incline him, upon the proposal of free grace, to presume to take liberty to the flesh ; so that same corruption, upon another occasion, works another way, upon the supposal of new sins, aggravated with preceding mercy and grace in God, and convictions and resolutions in him, to drive him into despondency and dejection of spirit, as if there were no pardon for such sins. And indeed, it is no wonder if the soul be thus set upon, if we set aside the consideration of the infinite grace of God, that far surpasseth the ill deserts of men. To speak of the very nature of the thing itself, there is no sin in its own nature more unpardonable than sin after pardon ; nothing so heinous, aggravated with so many high circumstances, which mingleth it with the worst ingredients, as this sin, after so much grace revealed in the gospel, to the end that we may not sin. Sins washed so freely, in so precious a fountain, and yet to defile again ; sins forgiven so readily and easily, the debt whereof, in justice, the whole creation was not able to pay, and yet to offend so gracious a Father ; a soul being thoroughly convinced of the vanity, folly, and madness of sin, of the de-

ceitfulness and baseness of its pleasures, and set in a posture against it, as the most deadly enemy; and yet, after all this, to be foiled, deceived, and ensnared:—here, I say, are very piercing considerations, which cannot but set the challenge very deep into the heart of a Christian, and wound him sore. How will he be filled with shame and confusion of face, if he look upon God, every look or beam of whose countenance represents unto the soul the vilest and most abominable visage of sin? Or if he look into himself, there is nothing but self-condemning there. He finds his own conscience staring him as a thousand witnesses. Thus the soul of a believer being environed, he is ready to apprehend, that though God should have pardoned the sins of his ignorance, yet that there is more difficulty in this,—to pardon his returnings to folly; and therefore are some put to harder exercise, and greater terrors after conversion, than in the time of it. The sins of ignorance being, as it were, removed as a cloud, and scored out in a heap; but the sins of knowledge after mercy, lying more distinctly and clearly in the view of the soul, it is more difficult to blot them out of the conscience, and sprinkle the heart from an evil conscience. These things I speak to you for this reason, that you may be afraid to sin. I suppose that there is no hazard of eternal damnation by sin. Grant that you know beforehand, that if you sin, there is yet forgiveness with him, and there is no hazard of perishing by it; yet, sure I am, it is the most foolish adventure in the world, to take liberty on that account; for though there be indemnity that way, as to thy eternal estate, yet I am persuaded, that there is more damage another way, in thy spiritual estate in this world, than all the gains of sin can countervail. There is a necessary loss of peace, and joy, and communion of the Holy Ghost. It is inevitable, in the very ordinary and natural course and connection of things, but that sin, that way indulged, will eclipse thy soul, and bring some darkness of sorrow and horror over it. To speak after the manner of man, and in the way of reason itself, the entertainment of that

which God hates will deprive thee of more solid joy and sweetness in him, than all the pleasures of sin could afford. Therefore I dare not say to you, as one too unadvisedly expresseth it, "Fear not, though you do sin, of any hurt that can come by these sins: for if you sin, it shall do you no hurt at all:" I say, this were indeed but to make you too bold with sin. I had rather represent unto you, that though ye be secured in your eternal estate, and there can come no condemnation that way, yet there is much hurt comes by sin, even in this world; and sure, I think it a very rational and Christian inducement, to prevail with a Christian not to sin, to tell him that he shall make a foolish bargain by it, for he shall lose much more than he can gain. Is there no hurt or loss incident to men, but eternal perdition? Nay, my beloved, there is a loss Christians may sustain by sinning freely, which all the combined advantages of sin cannot compensate. Is not one hour's communion with God, are not the peace of your own consciences, and the joy of the Spirit, such inestimable jewels, that it were more suitable for a man to sell the world, and buy them, than to sell them, and buy a poor momentary trifling contentment, which hath a sting in the tail of it, and leaves nothing but vexation after it? O these bruises in David's bones, these breaches in his spirit, that loss of the joy of his salvation! Let these teach you who are escaped the great hurt of sin, to fear, at least, to be hurt by it this way, more than ever you can expect to be helped by it.

But then, I desire to add this in the third place, that there is provision made against the discouragement of those souls that desire not to sin, and yet sin against their desire. If the challenge I spoke of be written in thy conscience, as it were with the point of a diamond, deeply engraven; yet my beloved, consider, "that if any man sin, we have an advocate," &c. There is an express caution against thy discouragement. Certainly our Saviour hath provided for it. Since the case is so incident, and the supposition so ordinary, it is not con-

ceivable that he hath not caveated and secured thy salvation in such cases: for he knew certainly before he pardoned thee, and visited thee at first, that thou wast to be subject unto this necessary burden of sin, and that it would often-times molest and trouble you, and sometimes prevail over you. All this he knew, that when he should order your forces, and draw out against sin, with the greatest desire and resolution, that yet you might be foiled unexpectedly; and this was not unknown to him, when he shewed mercy at first. Therefore, since his love is unchangeable, and his wisdom, being infinite, saith it should be so, he would never have cast his love on such persons, if those things which were then before him, could make him change. Now, I grant there is more wonder in the pardon of following sins, than in the first pardon; and therefore you should still love more, and praise more; but what is this wonder, to the wonder of his grace? It is swallowed up in that higher wonder, “for his thoughts and ways are not like ours;” his voice is, “Return, thou backsliding sinner, to thy first husband, though thou hast played the harlot.” Therefore, I desire that whatsoever be presented in that kind, to aggravate your sins, let it humble you more indeed, and make you hate sin, but let it not hinder you to think as highly of his mercy and grace, and to set that in the heavens above it.

## XXV.

1 John ii. 1.—And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, &c.

It is the natural office of the conscience to accuse a man in evil doing. As every man by sin is liable to the judgment of the supreme court of heaven, so he is likewise subject to the inferior court of his own conscience; for the most high God hath a deputy within every man's breast, that not only is a witness, but a judge, to fasten

an accusation, and pronounce a sentence upon him according to the law of God. And while it is so, that a man is accused in both courts, at the supreme tribunal, and the lower house of a man's own conscience; when man's accuser is within him, and God, his righteous Judge, above him, who can come in to plead such a man's cause? A person self-condemned, who shall plead for his absolution? If he cannot but accuse himself, and stop his mouth, being guilty before God of the transgression of all his law, then what place for an advocate to excuse him, or defend his cause? And who is it that can enter in the lists with God, who, because the supreme and highest Judge, must be both judge and party? Where shall a "days-man be found to lay his hands on both," and advocate the desperate-like cause of sinners? Truly, here we had been at an eternal stand, and here had the business stuck for ever, for anything that the creation could imagine, had not the infinite grace and wisdom of God opened themselves to mankind, in opening a door of hope to broken and outlaw sinners. And behold, here is the provision made for the security and salvation of lost souls,—“there is one able and mighty to save,”—a person found out fit for this advocacy, who taketh the broken cause of sinners in hand, and pleads it out, and makes out justice to be for them, and not against them,—“If any man sin, we have an advocate,” &c.

There is one thing imported, that sin maketh a man liable to a charge and accusation, and brings him under the hazard of judgment. Indeed it is hard enough to endure an accusing conscience, and a spirit wounded with the apprehension of wrath. When our Saviour would express great affliction, he doth it thus—“A man's enemies shall be those of his own house.” If a domestic enemy be so ill, what shall a bosom enemy be; when a man's accuser is not only beside him, but within him, not only in the house with him, but in the field too, carried about with him whithersoever he goeth, so that he can have no retiring or withdrawing place from it! Indeed, some poor

souls make a mad escape from under the challenge of their consciences; they get away from their keepers to more excess in sin, or make some vain diversion to company, and other things of the world. But the end thereof shall be more bitterness, for that will not still sleep within them, but shall awake upon them with more terror, and one day put them in such a posture, that all the comforts of the world shall be but as a drop of water to a man in a burning fever, or as oil to a flame. But, as I told you, that is not the greatest matter, to be self-accused, and self-condemned, if there were not a higher tribunal, which this process originally flows from, one greater than the conscience, who speaks to us in his word, and hath written his charge and sentence against us, and this is it which sets the soul most on edge, and it is but the very apprehension of that higher judgment, which is the gall and wormwood, the poison of those challenges in the conscience. I would desire you to look upon this, and consider that there is a sentence passed in the word of God upon all your actions, that the wrath of God is revealed in the scriptures as due to you, however you may flatter yourselves in your sins, and fancy an immunity from wrath, though you live in sin. I wish ye were once persuaded of this,—that all sinners must once appear before God's tribunal, and hear the righteous sentence of the dueness of punishment pronounced; I say, all must once appear, either to hear and believe it, or to see it executed. The wisdom of God requires, that all men's guilt, which is a transgression of the law, should once come to a judicial trial and decision by the law; and either this must be done in your own consciences here, that ye may sist yourselves before him, and take with your sins, and humble yourselves in his sight, and then the matter is put over upon a mediator: or else you must give him leave, nay he will take leave, to cite you to appear, to see the sentence executed, which was pronounced, since ye would not apply it to your own hearts. O! happy is that soul that anticipates that great day of final judgment, by a previous

self-judgment and self-trial. Well, then, hath the scriptures "included all under sin, that all men might be guilty, and every mouth stopped before God," Rom. iii. 19. What shall we do then? Since righteousness and justice is against us, who can plead for us? It would seem that there could be no relaxing, no repealing, no dispensing with this law; at least, that if there be anything of that kind, that righteousness and judgment can have no hand in it; yet, behold what follows, "we have an advocate," &c. And an advocate's office is to sue out the client's right, from principles of justice. Elsewhere Christ hath the office of a Judge, here he is an advocate for the party, and both of these may have a comfortable consideration: John v. 22. "The Father judgeth none, but hath committed all judgment to the Son." And yet, here we have an advocate with the Father, and that is, with the Father as judge. These do not cross one another, but make out our abundant consolation, that one entire office of our Saviour is represented under all these various notions suited to our capacity. A Judge he is: yea, his tribunal is the highest and supreme, from which there is no appeal; the ultimate decision lies here of all capital, or soul cases or causes. It is true, the Father doth not wholly divest himself of judgment and authority in the matters of life and death, for the gospel is his contrivance, as it was the Son's, but Christ is, as it were, substituted his vicegerent, in the administration of the second covenant. You read of a preparatory tribunal erected in the world by God the Creator, that is, of the law which condemns us. Now, such is the mercy and grace, and free love of God, that he hath relaxed that sentence as to the persons. He hath not taken that advantage which in justice he had against us; but upon some valuable considerations hath committed to the Son a royal power of prescribing new laws of life and death, and new terms of salvation; and Christ having, at his Father's will, satisfied the law, in what it did threaten us, he is, as it were, in compensation of such a great service, "made Lord and King both of the dead and living," Rom. xiv. 9;



and "all things in heaven and earth are given to him," Matt. xxviii. 19. John xiii. 2. And therefore, whatever soul is aggrieved under the accusation and charge of the law, hath liberty, yea, and is called to it, of duty, to appeal unto this new erected tribunal, where Christ sits to dispense life, according to the terms of grace; and he may be sure the Father will not judge him according to the law, if the Son absolve him in the gospel.

Now, with this it consists, that he who hath all final judgment in his hand, yet is our advocate in another consideration, as we consider God the Father sitting upon the tribunal of justice, and proceeding according to the terms and tenor of his first law, or covenant of life and death. Then Christ comes in with his advocacy for poor sinners, and sustains their persons, and maintains their cause, even from the principles of justice. He presents his satisfactory sacrifice, and pleads that we are not to be charged with that punishment that he hath suffered, because he hath indeed fulfilled our legal righteousness; and by this means the law's mouth is stopped, which had stopped our mouth, and the sinner is absolved, who was found guilty. Thus you see the salvation and absolution of believers is wonderfully secured, for there is a sentence for it in the court of the gospel, pronounced by the Son. But lest you think he should usurp such an absolute power, then hear, that he is an advocate to plead out the equity and justice of it, before the very tribunal of the law, that the law itself being the rule, the Father himself, who made the law, being the Judge, the poor soul that flies unto him as a refuge, may be saved, since what it craved of us it gets in him, and is as fully satisfied that way, as it could have been by us; therefore, that same righteousness which bids condemn the sinner, commands to save the believer in Christ, though a sinner. What shall a soul then fear? "Who shall condemn? it is Christ that justifieth;" for he is judge of life and death, and that is much. But it is the Father that justifieth, and that is more: whatsoever tribunal you be cited unto, you may

be sure. Is it the gospel? then the Son is judge. Is it the law? then the Son is advocate. He will not only give life himself, but see that his Father do it, and warrant you from all back-hazards. Nay, before the matter shall misgive, as he comes down from off the throne, to stand at the bar and plead for sinners, who devolve themselves upon him, so he will not spare, if need require, to degrade himself further, if I may so say, and of an advocate become a suppliant. And truly he ceased not in the days of his flesh to pray for us, "with strong cries and tears." Heb. vii. "And now he lives still to make intercession for us." He can turn from the plea of justice, to the intercession and supplication of mercy, and if strict justice will not help him, yet grace and favour he is sure will not disappoint him.

There is a divine contexture of justice and mercy in the business of man's redemption; and there is nothing so much declares infinite wisdom, as the method, order, and frame of it. Mercy might have been shewed to sinners, in gracious and free pardon of their sins, and dispensing with the punishment due to their persons, yet the Lord's justice and faithfulness in that first commination might be wronged and disappointed by it, if no satisfaction should be made for such infinite offences, if the law were wholly made void both to the punishment, as also to the person. Therefore, in the infinite deeps of God's wisdom, there was a way found out to declare both mercy and justice, to make both to shine gloriously in this work; and indeed that is the great wonder of men and angels, such a conjunction or constellation of divine attributes in one work. And indeed, it is only the most happy and favourable aspect in which we can behold the divine Majesty. The Psalmist, Psalm lxxxv., expects much good from this conjunction of the celestial attributes, and prognosticates salvation to be near hand, and all good things, as the immediate effect of it. There is a meeting there, as it were, of some honourable personages (vers. 10, 11.) as are in heaven. The meeting is strange, if you consider

the parties,—Mercy and Truth, Righteousness and Peace. If mercy and peace had met thus friendly, it had been less wonder; but it would seem, that righteousness and truth should stand off, or meet only to reason and dispute the business with mercy; but here is the wonder,—Mercy and Truth meet in a friendly manner, “and kisseth one another.” There is a perfect agreement and harmony amongst them, about this matter of our salvation. There was a kind of parting at man’s fall, but they met again at Christ’s birth. Here is the uniting principle “Truth springing out of the earth,” because he who is “the truth and the life,” was to spring out of the earth, therefore, “righteousness will look down from heaven,” and countenance the business, and this will make all of them to meet with a loving salutation.

Now, as this was the contecture of the divine attributes in the business of redemption; so our Lord and Saviour taketh upon him divers names, offices, and exercises, different functions for us, because he knoweth that his Father may justly exact of man personal satisfaction, and hath him at this disadvantage, and that he might have refused to have accepted any other satisfaction from another person. Therefore he puts on the habit and form of a suppliant and intercessor for us; and so, while he was in the flesh, “he ceased not to offer up prayers and supplications with strong cries and tears;” and he is said “still to make intercession for us.” As he learned obedience, though a Son, so he learned to be a humble suppliant, though equal with God.” Because our claim depends wholly on grace, he came off the bench, and stood at the bar, not only pleading but praying for us, entreating favour and mercy to us. And then, he personates an advocate in another consideration, and pleads upon terms of justice, that we be pardoned, because his Father once having accepted him in our stead, he gave a satisfaction in value equal to our debt, and performed all that we were personally bound to. So then you may understand how it is partly an act of justice, partly an act of mercy in God to forgive

sin to believers, though indeed mercy and grace is the predominant ingredient, because love and grace was the very first rise and spring of sending a Saviour and Redeemer, and so the original of that very purchase and prize. He freely sent his Son, and freely accepted him in our stead; but once standing in our room, justice craves that no more be exacted of us, since he hath done the business himself.

A sinner stands accused in his own conscience, and before God; therefore, to the end that we get no wrong, there is a twofold advocate given us, one in the earth, in our consciences, another in the heavens with God. Christ is gone up to the highest tribunal, where the cause receives a definitive sentence, and there he manageth it above; so that though Satan should obtrude upon a poor soul a wrong sentence in its own conscience, and bring down a false and counterfeit act, as it were, extracted out of the register of heaven, whereby to deceive the poor soul, and condemn it in itself, yet there is no hazard above; he dare not appear there, before the highest court, for he hath already succumbed on earth. When Christ was here, "the prince of the world was judged and cast out," and so he will never once put in an accusation into heaven, because he knoweth our faithful advocate is there, where nothing can pass without his knowledge and consent. And this is a great comfort, that all inferior sentences in thy perplexed conscience, which Satan, through violence, hath imposed upon thee, are rescinded above in the highest court, and shall not stand to thy prejudice, whoever thou be that desirest to forsake sin and come to Jesus Christ.

But how doth Christ plead? Can he plead us not guilty? Can he excuse or defend our sins? No, that is not the way. That accusation of the word and law against us is confessed, is proven, all is undeniably clear; but he pleads satisfied, though guilty,—he presents his satisfactory sacrifice, and the savour of that perfumes heaven, and pacifieth all. He shews God's bond and

discharge of the receipt of the sum of our debt, and thus is he cleared, and we absolved. Therefore I desire you whoever you are that are challenged for sin, and the transgression of the law, if ye would have a solid way of satisfaction and peace to your consciences, take with you guiltiness; plead not "not guilty;" do not excuse or extenuate, but aggravate your guilt. Nay, in this you may help Satan, accuse yourselves, and say that you know more evil in yourselves than he doth, and open that up before God. But in the meantime, consider how it is managed above. Plead thou also, satisfied in Christ though guilty; and so thou mayest say to thy accuser, If thou hast any thing to object against me, why I may not be saved, though a sinner, thou must go up to the highest tribunal to propone it, thou must come before my judge and advocate above; but forasmuch as thou dost not appear there, it is but a lie, and a murdering lie.

Now this is the way that the Spirit advocates for us in our consciences, John xiv. and xv. 26. Παρακλητος is rendered here "Advocate," there "Comforter." Both suit well, and may be conjoined in one, and given to both, for both are comfortable advocates,—Christ with the Father, and the Spirit with us. Christ is gone above for it, and he sent the Spirit in his stead. As God hath a deputy judge in man, that is, man's conscience, so the Son, our advocate with God, hath a deputy advocate to plead the cause in our conscience, and this he doth, partly by opening up the Scriptures to us, and making us understand the way of salvation in them, partly manifesting his own works and God's gifts in us by a superadded light of testimony, and partly by comforting us against all outward and inward sorrows. Sometimes he pleads with the soul against Satan "not guilty," for Satan is a slanderous and a false accuser, and cares not *calumniari fortiter ut aliquid hæreat*, to calumniate stoutly, and he knoweth something will stick. He will not only object known sins and transgressions of the law, but his manner is to cast a mist upon the eye of the soul, and darken all its graces, and then he

brings forth his process, that they have no grace, no faith in Christ, no love to God, no sorrow for sin. In such a case, it is the Spirit's office to plead it out to our consciences, that we are not totally guilty, as we are charged; and this is not so much a clearing of ourselves, as a vindication of the free gifts of God, which lie under his aspersion and reproach. Indeed, if there be a great stress here, and, for wise reasons, the Spirit forbear to plead out this point, but leave a poor soul to puddle it out alone, and scrape its evidences together in the dark,—I say, if thou find this too hard for thee to plead not guilty, then my advice is, that ye wave and suspend that question. Yield it not wholly, but rather leave it entire, and do as if it were not. Suppose that article and point were gained against thee, what wouldst thou do next? Certainly thou must say, I would then seek grace and faith from him who giveth liberally. I would then labour to receive Christ in the promises. I say, do that now, and thou takest a short and compendious way to win thy cause, and overcome Satan. Let that be thy study, and he hath done with it.

But in any challenge about the transgression of the law, or desert of eternal wrath, the Spirit must not plead "not guilty," for thou must confess that; but in as far as he driveth at a further conclusion, to drive thee away from hope and confidence to despondency of spirit; in so far the Spirit clears up unto the conscience that this doth no ways follow from that confession of guiltiness, since there is a Saviour that hath satisfied for it, and invites all to come, and accept him for their Lord and Saviour.

## XXVI.

1 John ii. 1.—We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous.

THERE is no settlement to the spirit of a sinner that is once touched with the sense of his sins, and apprehension of the justice and wrath of God, but in some clear and distinct understanding of the grounds of consolation in the gospel, and the method of salvation revealed in it. There is no solid peace-giving answer to the challenges of the law and thy own conscience, but in the advocacy of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of sinners. And therefore the Apostle propones it here for the comfort of believers who are incident to be surprised through the suddenness of sin, and often deceived by the subtilty of Satan, whose soul's desires and sincere endeavours are to be kept from iniquity, and therefore they are made to groan within themselves, and sometimes sadly to conclude against themselves, upon the prevailing of sin. Here is the cordial, I say. He presents to them Jesus Christ standing before the bar of heaven, and pleading his satisfaction in the name of such souls, and so suiting forth an exemption and discharge for them from their sins. So he presents us with the most comfortable aspect, Christ standing between us and justice, the Mediator interposed between us and the Father, so there can come no harm to such poor sinners, except it come through his sides first, and no sentence can pass against them, unless he succumb in his righteous cause in heaven.

The strength of Christ's advocacy for believers consists partly in his qualification for the office, partly in the ground and foundation of his cause. His qualification we have in this verse, the ground and foundation of his pleading in the next verse, in that "he is a propitiation for our sins;" and upon this very ground his advocacy is both just and effectual.

Every word holds out some fitness, and therefore every word drops out consolation to a troubled soul. "With the Father," speaks out the relation he and we stand in to the judge. He hath not to do with an austere and rigid judge, that is implacable and unsatisfiable, who will needs adhere peremptorily to the letter of the law, for then we should be all undone. If there were not some paternal affection, and fatherly clemency and moderation in the judge; if he were not so disposed, as to make some candid interpretation upon it, and in some manner to relax the sentence, as to our personal suffering, we could never stand before him, nor needed any advocate appear for us. But here is the great comfort,—he is Christ's Father and our Father, so himself told us, John xx. 17, "I go to my Father and your Father, and my God and your God." And therefore we may be persuaded that he will not take advantage, even that which he hath in justice, of us. And though we be apprehensive of his anger, in our failings and offences, and this makes us often to be both afraid and ashamed to come to him, measuring him after the manner of men, who are soon angry, and often implacably angry; though we imagine that he cannot but repel and put back our petitions, and therefore we have not the boldness to offer them; yet he ceaseth not to be our Father and Christ's Father." And if ye would have the character of a father, look Jer. xxxi. 18, how he stands affected towards ashamed and confounded Ephraim, "how his bowels move, and his compassions yearn towards him, as his pleasant child." The truth is, in such a case, in which we are captives against our will, and stumble against our purpose, "he pities us as a father doth his children," knowing that we are but dust and grass, Psal. ciii. 13—17. See the excellent and sweet application of this relation by the Psalmist—if it stir him, it stirs up rather the affection of pity, than the passion of anger: he pities his poor child, when he cries out of violence and oppression; and therefore, there are great hopes that our advocate Jesus Christ shall prevail



in his suits for us, because he, with whom he deals,—the Father,—loves him, and loves us, and will not stand upon strict terms of justice, but rather attemper all with mercy and love. He will certainly hear his “well-beloved Son, for in him he is well pleased; his soul rests and takes complacency in him;” and for his sake he adopts us to be his children; and therefore he will both hear him in our behalf, and our prayers too, for his name’s sake.

But this is superadded to qualify our advocate,—“he is the Christ of God,” anointed for this very purpose, and so hath a fair and lawful calling to this office. “He takes not this honour to himself, but was called thereto of his Father,” Heb. v. 4. As he did not make himself a priest, so he did not intrude upon the advocateship, “but he that said, Thou art my Son,” called him to it. If a man had never so great ability to plead in the law, yet, except he be licentiate and graduate, he may not take upon him to plead a cause. But our Lord Jesus hath both skill and authority; he hath both the ability and the office; was not a self-intruder or usurper, but the council of Heaven did licentiate him, and graduate him for the whole office of mediatorship: in which there is the greatest stay and support for a sinking soul, to know that all this frame and fabric of the gospel was contrived by God the Father, and that he is master-builder in it. Since it is so, there can nothing control it or shake it, since it is the very will of God, “with whom we have to do,” that a mediator should stand between him and us; and since he hath such a mind to clear poor souls, that he freely chooseth and giveth them an able Advocate, it is a great token that he hath a mind to save as many as come and submit to him, and that he is ready to pardon, when he prepares so fit an Advocate for us, and hath not left us alone to plead our own cause.

But the anointing of Christ for it, implies both *δυναμιν* and *ἐξουσιαν*, *potentiam et potestatem*, the gifts for it as well as the authority, and the ability as well as the office; for God hath singularly qualified him for it,—“given him

the Spirit above measure," Isa. lxi. 1. He received gifts not only to distribute to men, but to exercise for men, and their advantage," Psal. lxxviii. 18. And therefore the Father seems to interest himself in the cause as it were his own. He furnisheth our Advocate, as if it were to plead the cause of his own justice against us; "he upholds and strengthens Christ in our cause, as really as if it were his own," Isa. xlii. 1, 6, which expresseth to us the admirable harmony and consent of heaven to the salvation of as many as make Christ their refuge, and desire not to live in sin. Though they be often foiled, yet there is no hazard of the failing of their cause above, because our Advocate hath both excellent skill, and undoubtable authority.

Yea, he is so fully qualified for this, that he is called Jesus the Saviour; he is such an Advocate that he saves all he pleads for. The best advocate may lose the cause, either through the weakness of itself, or the iniquity of the judge; but he is the Advocate and the Saviour, that never succumbed in his undertaking for any soul. Be their sins never so heinous—their accusation never so just and true—their accuser never so powerful, yet they who put their cause in his hand; who flee in hither for refuge, being wearied of the bondage of sin and Satan, he hath such a prevalency with the Father, that their cause cannot miscarry. Even when justice itself seems to be the opposite party, yet he hath such marvellous success in his office, "that justice shall rather meet amicably with mercy and peace, and salute them kindly," Psal. lxxxv. 10, 11, as being satisfied by him, than He come short in his undertaking.

But there is another personal qualification needful, or all should be in vain,—"Jesus the righteous." If he were not righteous in himself, he had need of an advocate for himself, and might not plead for sinners; but he is "righteous and holy, no guile found in his mouth; without sin, an unblameable and unspotted High Priest, else he could not mediate for others, and such an Advocate

too, else he could not plead for others," Heb. vii. 26. As this perfected his sacrifice, that he offered not for his own sins, neither needed he, so this completes his advocacy, and gives it a mighty influence for his poor clients, that he needs not plead for himself. If, then, the law cannot attach our Lord and Saviour; can lay no claim to him, or charge against him, then certainly, all that he did behoved to be for others; and so he stands in a good capacity to plead for us before the Father, and to sue out a pardon to us, though guilty; "for if the just was delivered for the unjust, and the righteous suffered for the unrighteous," much more is it consistent with the justice of the Father, to deliver and save the unrighteous and unjust sinner for the righteous Advocate's sake. "If ye seek me, then let these go free," saith he, John xviii. 8. So he in effect pleads with God his Father, O Father, if thou deal with me, the righteous One, as with an unrighteous man, then, in all reason and justice, thou must deal with my poor clients, though unrighteous, as with righteous men. If justice thought she did me no wrong to punish me, the righteous, then let it not be thought a wrong to justice to pardon, absolve, and justify the unrighteous.

Now, if he be so righteous a person, it follows necessarily, that he hath a righteous cause, for an honest man will not advocate an unjust cause. But how can the cause of believers be said to be righteous, when justice itself, and the law, indicts the accusation against them? Can they plead not guilty; or he for them? There is a twofold righteousness, in relation to a twofold rule; a righteousness of strict justice, in relation to the first covenant; and this cannot be pleaded, that our cause is exactly conformable to the covenant of works. We cannot, nor Christ in our name, plead any thing from that, which holds forth nothing but personal obedience, or else personal satisfaction. But yet our cause may be found to be righteous, in relation to the second covenant, and the rule and terms of it, in as far as God hath revealed his accept-

ance of a surety in our stead, and hath dispensed with the rigour of the law, according to that new law of grace and righteousness contempered together. The cause of a desperate lost sinner may thus sustain before the righteous Judge; and it is upon this new account that he pleads for us, because he hath satisfied in our stead; and now it is as righteous and equitable with God, to shew mercy and forgiveness to believing sinners, as it is to reveal wrath and anger against impenitent sinners.

I know there will be some secret whisperings in your hearts upon the hearing of this. Oh! it is true; it is a most comfortable thing for them whose advocate he is. There is no fear of the miscarrying of their cause above; but as for me, I know not if he be an advocate for me, whether I may come into that sentence, "We have an advocate," &c. I confess it is true, he is not an advocate for every one, for while he was here, "he prayed not for the world, but them that were given him out of the world," John xvii.; much more will he not plead for the world, when he is above. He is rather witnessing against the unbelieving world. But yet, I believe his advocacy is not restrained only to those who actually believe, as neither his supplication was, John xvii. But as he prayed for those who should hereafter believe, so he still pleads for all the elect, not only to procure remission to the penitent, but repentance to the impenitent. There is one notable effect of the advocacy and intercession of Christ, which indeed is common to the world, but particularly intended for the elect, that is, the present suspension of the execution of the curse of the law, by virtue whereof there is liberty to offer the gospel, and call sinners to repentance. No question, the sparing of the world, the forbearance and long-suffering of God toward sinners, is the result and fruit of our Lord's intercession and advocacy in heaven; and so, even the elect have the benefit of it before they believe; but it is so provided, that they shall never sensibly know this, nor have any special comfort from it, till they believe, and so Christ doth not plead

for pardon to their sins till they repent. He pleads even before we repent, but we cannot know it; yet he pleads not that pardon be bestowed before they repent, and so the saving efficacy of his advocacy is peculiar and proper in the application to believing souls.

Now consider, I say, whether or not thou be one that finds the power of that persuasion,—“ My little children, I write to you that ye sin not,” &c. Canst thou unfeignedly say, that it is the desire and endeavour of thy soul not to sin; and that thou art persuaded to this, not only from the fear and terror of God, but especially from his mercy and goodness in the gospel? This is one part of the character of such as Christ’s advocacy is actually extended to. Moreover, being surprised with sin, and overcome beside thy purpose, and against thy desire, dost thou apprehend sin as thy greatest misery, and arraign thyself before the tribunal of God; or art thou attached in thy own conscience, and the law pleaded against thee, before the bar of thy own conscience; then, I say, according to this Scripture, thou art the soul unto whom this comfort belongs; thou art called of God to decide the controversy in thy own conscience. By flying up, and appealing to that higher tribunal, where Christ is advocate, thou mayest safely give over, and trust thy cause to him.

But, on the other hand, O how deplorable and remediless is the condition of those souls who have no cause of this kind stated within their own conscience; who are not pursued by Satan and sin, but rather at peace with them, amicably agreeing with them, acting their lusts and will! You who have no bonds upon you, to restrain you from sin, “ neither the terror of the Lord persuadeth you, nor the love of Christ constrains you;” you can be kept from no beloved sin, nor pressed to any serious and spiritual labour in God’s service; and then when you sin, you have no accuser within, or such an one as you suppress, and suffer not to plead it out against you, or cite you before God’s tribunal. I say unto you, (and, alas! many of you are such,) you do not, you cannot know, that you

have an interest in this advocate. You can have no benefit nor saving advantage from Christ's pleading, while you remain thus in your sins. Alas ! poor souls, what will ye do? Can you manage your own cause alone? Though you defraud and deceive your own consciences now; though ye offer violence to them, do ye think so to carry it above? Nay, persuade yourselves you must one day appear, and none to speak for you; God your judge; your conscience your accuser; and Satan, your tormentor, standing by; and then woe to him that is alone, when the advocate becomes judge. In that day blessed are all those that have trusted in him, and used him formerly as an advocate against sin and Satan; but woe to those for ever, who would never suffer this cause to be pleaded, while there was an advocate !

## XXVII.

1 John ii. 2.—And he is the propitiation, &c.

HERE is the strength of Christ's plea, and ground of his advocacy, "that he is the propitiation." The advocate is the priest, and the priest is the sacrifice; and such efficacy this sacrifice hath, that the propitiatory sacrifice may be called the very propitiation and pacification for sin. Here is the marrow of the gospel, and these are the breasts of consolation which any poor sinner might draw by faith, and bring out soul refreshment. But truly, it comes not out but by drawing, and there is nothing fit for that but the heart, that alone can suck out of these breasts the milk of consolation. The well of salvation in the word is deep, and many of you have nothing to draw with; you want the bucket that should be let down, that is, the affectionate meditation and consideration of the heart; and therefore you go away empty. You come full of other cares, and desires, and delights, no empty room in your hearts for this, no soul longings and thirstings

after the righteousness of God ; and therefore you return as you came, empty of all solid and true refreshment. Oh, that we could draw it forth to you, and then drop it into your hearts, and make it descend into your consciences !

In these words you may consider more distinctly, who this is, and then, for whom he is made a sacrifice. and withal, the efficacy of this sacrifice, and the sufficiency. Who this is, is pointed out as with the finger, (He is) that is, "Jesus Christ the righteous." The apostle demonstrates him as a remarkable person, as in his evangel the Baptist doth. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world." And the church, Isa. lxiii. 1, taketh a special notice of this person, "Who is this that cometh from Edom?" And that which maketh him so remarkable, is his strange habit, "after the treading the wine-press of wrath alone," that he was made a bloody sacrifice to pacify God ; and to shew you how notable a person he is, he is signally and eminently pointed out by the Father, Isa. xlii. 1, "Behold my servant," &c., as if he would have the eyes of all men fixed upon him, with wonder and admiration. And for this end, he singled him out from the multitude, by a voice from heaven, which testified unto him particularly, "this is my well-beloved Son ; hear him." Therefore the apostle had reason to say, 2 Cor. v. 14, that he is "one for all," so notable an one, that he may serve for all. He stands in more value in the count of God than all mankind. All creatures are cyphers, which being never so much multiplied, come to nothing, amount not beyond nothing ; but set him before them, put Christ on the head of them, and he signifies more than they all do, and gives them all some estimation in the count. And so they stand in Paul's calculation, Phil. iii. which he makes with very great assurance and confidence, "yea, doubtless I count all dung, but the super-excellent knowledge of Christ,"—Christ is only the figure that hath signification, and gives signification to other things.

But in this business, the consideration of the persons interested, he and us, maketh us behold a great emphasis in the gospel. "He a propitiation, and that for our sins," is a strange combination of wonders. If it had been some other person less distant from us, that were thus given for us, and standing in our room, then we should have better understood the exchange. Things of like worth, to be thus shuffled together, and stand in one another's place, is not so strange. But between the persons mentioned, "him" and "us," there is such an infinite distance, that it is wonderful, how the one descends to the room of the other, to become a sacrifice for us. O that we could express this to our own hearts, with all the emphasis that it hath! "He the Lord," and "we" the servants; "he the king," and "we" the poor beggars; "he the brightness of his Father's glory," and "we" the shame and ignominy of the whole creation; "he counting it no robbery to be equal with God, and being in the form of God," and "we" not equal to the worst of creatures, because of sin, and being in the form of devils. Had it been a holy and righteous man for sinners, it had been a strange enough exchange; but "he" is not only "holy" and "harmless" but "higher than the heavens." O what a vast descent was this, from heaven to earth, from a lord to a servant, from an eternal Spirit to mortal flesh, from God to creatures! and to descend thus far for such persons, not only unworthy in themselves, such as could not conciliate any liking, but such as might procure loathing, as is described, Ezek. xvi. and Rom. v. 6. and 1 Pet. iii. 18, "while we were enemies," and might have expected a commissioner from heaven, with vengeance against us. Behold, how the mysterious design of love breaks up, and opens itself to the world, "in sending his own Son for us!" and this is exceedingly aggravated from the absolute freedom of it, that there was nothing to pre-engage him to it, but infinite impediments in the way to dissuade him; many impediments of his affection, and many difficulties to his power, and then, no gain nor ad-



vantage to be expected from such creatures, notwithstanding of such an undertaking for them.

Now, herein is the strongest support of faith, and the greatest incentive to love, and the mightiest persuasive to obedience that can be. I say, the strongest support of faith; for, a soul apprehending the greatness and heinousness of sins, and the inviolableness of God's righteousness, with the purity of his holiness, can hardly be persuaded, that any thing can compense that infinite wrong that is done to his Majesty, though ordinarily the small and superficial apprehension of sin makes a kind of facility in this, or an empty credulity of the gospel. The reason why most men do not question and doubt of the gospel, and of their acceptance before God, is not because they are established in the faith, but rather because they do not so seriously and deeply believe, and ponder their own sins, and God's holiness; which, if many did, they would find it a greater difficulty to attain to a solid and quieting persuasion of the grounds of the gospel: they would find much ado to settle that point of the readiness of God, to pardon and accept sinners. But now, I say, all this difficulty, and these clouds of doubts will vanish at the bright appearance of this Sun of Righteousness, that is, at the solid consideration of the glorious excellency of him that was given a ransom for us. Herein the soul may be satisfied, that God is satisfied, when he considers what a person hath undertaken it, "even Jesus the righteous, the only Son of God, in whom his soul delighteth;" whose glorious divine majesty puts the stamp of infinite worth upon all his sufferings, and raiseth up the dignity of the sacrifice, beyond the sufferings of all creatures. For there are two things needful for the full satisfaction of a troubled soul, that apprehends the heinousness of sin, and height of wrath; nothing can calm and settle this storm, but the appearance of two things; *first*, of God's willingness and readiness to pardon sin, and save sinners; *next*, of the answerableness of a ransom to his justice, that so there may be no impediment in his way to forgive. Now, let

this once be established in thy heart, that such an one, so beloved of God, and so equal to God, is the propitiation for our sins, that "God hath sent his only begotten Son," for this very business, unrequired and unknown of us; then, there is the clearest demonstration of these two things, that can be,—“of the love of God, and of the worth of the ransom.” What difficulty can be supposed in it, actually to pardon thy heinous sins, when his love hath overcome infinitely greater difficulties, “to send One, his own Son, to procure pardon,” John iii. Certainly, it cannot but be the very delight of his heart to forgive sins, “since he spared not his Son” to purchase it; since he hath had such an everlasting design of love, which broke out in Christ’s coming; and then, such a person he is, that the merit of his sufferings cannot but be a valuable and sufficient compensation to justice for our personal exemption, because he is “One above all, of infinite highness;” and therefore his lowness hath an infinite worth in it.—“of infinite fulness,” and therefore his emptiness is of infinite price, “of infinite glory,” and so his shame is equivalent to the shame and malediction of all mankind. So then, whatsoever thou apprehendest of thy own sins, or God’s holiness, that seemeth to render thy pardon difficult, lay but in the balance with that, first, the free and rich expression of the infinite love of God, in sending such an One for a ransom; and sure, that speaks as much to his readiness and willingness, as if a voice spake it just now from heaven; and then, to take away all scruple, lay the infinite worth of his person, who is the propitiation, with thy sins, and it will certainly out-weigh them; so that thou mayest be fully quieted, and satisfied in that point, that it is as easy for him to pardon, as for thee to confess sin and ask pardon; nay, that he is more ready to give it thee, than thou to ask.

But, in the next place, I desire you to look upon this, as the greatest incentive of affection. O how should it inflame your hearts to consider, that such an one became a sacrifice for our sins; to think that angels hath not such

a word to comfort themselves withal ! Those innumerable companies of angels, who left their station, and were once in dignity above us, have not such glad tidings to report one to another in their societies, as we have ; they cannot say, “ he is the propitiation for our sins.” This is the wonderful mystery, “ that blessed angels desire to look into.” They gaze upon it, and fix the eyes of their admiration “ upon God manifested in the flesh,” wondering at the choice of mortal man, before immortal spirits, that he is a ransom for them, and not for their own brethren who left their station ; how should this endear him to our souls, and his will to our hearts. “ who hath so loved us, and given himself for us !” Hath he given himself for us, and should we deny ourselves to him, especially when we consider what an infinite disparity is between the worth, and difference in the advantage of it. He gave his blessed self a sacrifice, he offered himself to death for us, not to purchase anything to himself, but life to us. And what is it he requires but your base and unworthy self,—to offer up your lusts and sins in a sacrifice by mortification, and your hearts and affections in a thanksgiving offering, wherein your own greatest gain lies too. For this is truly to find and save yourselves, thus to quit yourselves to him.

The efficacy of this is holden out in the word, “ propitiation for our sins.” The virtue of Christ’s sacrifice is to pacify justice, and make God propitious, that is, favourable and merciful to sinners. In which there are three considerable things imported. One is, that sin is the cause of enmity between God and man, and sets us at an infinite distance,—that sin is a heinous provocation of his wrath. Another is expressed, that “ Christ is the propitiation,”—in opposition to that provocation, he pacifies wrath, and then conciliates favour, by the sacrifice of himself. All the expressions of the gospel import the damnable and deplorable estate that sin puts man into ; “ reconciliation” imports the standing enmity and feud between God and man ; “ propitiation” imports the provo-

cation of the holy and just indignation of God against man, the fuel whereof is our sins; "justification implies the lost and condemned estate of a sinner, under the sentence and curse of the law; all that is in the gospel minds us of our original, of the forlorn estate in which he found us, none pitying us, nor able to help us. I would desire that this might first take impression on your hearts,—that sin sets God and man at infinite distance; and not only distance, but disaffection and enmity. It hath sown the seeds of that woful discord, and kindled that contention, which, if it be not quenched by the blood of Christ, will burn to everlasting, so that none can dwell with it and yet sinners must dwell in it. There is a provoking quality in it, fit to alienate the holy heart of God, and to incense his indignation, which, when once it is kindled, "who can stand before it?" Do but consider what you conceive of wrongs done to you, how they stir your passions, and provoke your patience, so that there is much ado to get you pacified; and what heinousness must then be in your offences against God, both in regard of number and kind? O, that you could but impartially weigh this matter, you would find, that in the view of God, all wrongs and injuries between men evanish! "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned." That relation and respect of sin to God, exhaust all other respects of injuries towards men. It is true, that his Majesty is free from passion, and is not commoved and troubled as your spirits are. Yet such is the provoking nature of sin, that it cries for vengeance, and brings a sinner under the dreadful sentence of divine wrath, which he both pronounceth, and can execute without any inward commotion or disturbance of spirit: but, because we conceive of him after our manner, therefore he speaks in such terms to us. But that which he would signify by it, is, that the sinner is in as dreadful and damnable a condition by sin, as if the Lord were mightily inflamed with anger and rage. The just punishment is as due and certain, as if he were subject to such passions as we are; and so much the more certain, that he is not. Now, I desire you to

consider, how mightily the heinousness of sin is aggravated, partly by the quality of the persons, and partly by the consideration of his benefits to us. A great man resents a light wrong heavily, because his person makes the wrong heavier. O! what do you think the Most High should do, considering his infinite distance from us, his glorious Majesty and greatness, his pure holiness, his absolute power and supremacy? What vile and abominable characters of presumption and rebellion do all these imprint upon disobedience! Shall he suffer himself to be despised and neglected of men, when there is no petty creature above another, but he will be jealous of his credit, and vindicate himself from contempt? And then, when ingratitude is mingled in with rebellion, it makes sin exceeding sinful; and sinful sin exceeding provoking, to proclaim open war against the holy and righteous will of him to whom we owe ourselves, and all that we are or have; to do evil, because he is good, and be unthankful, because he is kind to take all his own members, faculties, creatures, and employ them as instruments of dishonour against himself, there is here fuel for feeding everlasting indignation; there is no indignity, no vileness, no wickedness to this. All the provocations of men, how just soever, are in the sight of this groundless and vain, like a child's indignation. All are but imaginary injuries, consisting but in opinion, in regard of that which sin hath in the bosom of it against God.

But how shall any satisfaction be made for the injury of sin? What shall pacify his justly deserved anger? Here is the question indeed, that would have driven the whole world to a *nonplus*, if once the majesty and holiness of God had been seen. But the ignorance of God's greatness, and men's sinfulness, made the world to fancy some expiations of sin, and satisfactions to God, partly by sacrifices of beasts, partly by prayer, and repentance for sins.

## XXVIII.

1 John ii. 3. - And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.

THIS age pretends to much knowledge, beyond former ages; knowledge, I say, not only in other natural arts and sciences, but especially in religion. Whether there be any great advancement in other knowledge, and improvement of that which was, to a further extent and clearness, I cannot judge; but I believe, there is not much of it in this nation, nor do we so much pretend to it. But, we talk of the enlargements of divine knowledge, and the breaking up of a clearer light in the point of religion, in respect of which we look on former times, "as the times of ignorance and darkness, which God winked at." If it were so indeed, I should think the time happy, and bless the days we live in, for as many sour and sad accidents as they are mixed withal. Indeed, if the variety of books, and multiplicity of discourses upon religion; if the multitude of disputes about points of truth, and frequency of sermons, might be held for a sufficient proof of this pretension, we should not want store enough of knowledge and light. But, I fear that this is not the touchstone of the Holy Ghost, according to which we may try the truth of this assertion; that this is not the rule, by which to measure either the truth, or degrees of our knowledge; but for all that, we may be lying buried in Egyptian darkness; and while such a light seems to shine about us, our hearts may be a dungeon of darkness, of ignorance of God and unbelief, and our ways and walk full of stumbling in the darkness. I am led to entertain these sad thoughts of the present times from the words of the apostle, which give us the true designation of a true Christian, to be the knowledge of God, and the character of his knowledge, to be obedience to his commands. If, accord-

ing to this level, we take the estimate of the proportion of our knowledge and light, I am afraid lest there be found as much ignorance of God, and darkness, as we do foolishly fancy that we have of light. However, to find it, will be some breaking up of light in our hearts; and to discover how little we know indeed upon a solid account, will be the first morning star of that "Sun of Righteousness, which will shine more and more to the perfect day." Therefore we should labour to bring our light to the lamp of this world, and our knowledge to this testimony of unquestionable authority, that having recourse "to the law and to the testimony," we may find if there be light in us, or so much light as men think they see. If we could but open our eyes to the shining light of this Scripture, I doubt not but we should be able to see that which few do see, that is, that much of the pretended light of this age is darkness and ignorance. I do not speak of errors only that come forth in the garments of new light, but especially of the vulgar knowledge of the truth of religion, which is far adulterated from the true metal and stamp of divine knowledge, by the intermixture of the gross darkness of our affections and conversation, as that other is from the naked truth; and therefore both of them are found light in the balance of the sanctuary, and counterfeit by this touch-stone of obedience.

To make out this examination the better, I shall endeavour to open these three things unto you, which comprehend the words: 1st, That the knowledge of God in Jesus Christ, is the most proper designation of a Christian; "hereby we know that we know him," which is as much as to say, that we are true Christians;—2dly, That the proper character of true knowledge, is obedience, or conscionable practising of what we know;—and then, lastly, That the only estimate or trial of our estate before God, is made according to the appearance of his work in us, and not by immediate thrusting ourselves into the secrets of God's hidden decrees, "hereby we know," &c. Here then, in a narrow circle, we have all, the

work and business of a Christian. His direct and principal duty is, to know God, and keep his commands, which are not two distinct duties, as they come in a religious consideration, but make up one complete work of Christianity, which consists in conformity to God. Then the reflex and secondary duty of a Christian, which makes much for his comfort, is, "to know that he knows God." "To know God, and keep his commands," is a thing of indispensable necessity to the being of a Christian; "to know that we know him is of great concernment to the comfort and well-being of a Christian. Without the first, a man is as miserable as he can be, without the sense and feeling of misery, because he wants the spring and fountain of all happiness; without the second, a Christian is unhappy, indeed, for the present, though he may not be called miserable, because he is more happy than he knows of, and only unhappy, because he knows not his happiness.

For the first, then, knowledge is a thing so natural to the spirit of a man, that the desire of it is restless and unsatiable. There is some appetite of it in all men, though in the generality of people (because of immersedness in earthly things, and the predominancy of corrupt lusts and affections, which hinder most men's souls to wait upon that more noble inquiry after knowledge, in which only a man differs really from a beast) there be little or no stirring that way; yet some finer spirits there are, that are unquiet this way, and, with Solomon, give themselves, and apply their hearts to search out wisdom. But this is the curse of man's curiosity at first, in seeking after unnecessary knowledge, when he was happy enough already, and knew as much of God and his works, as might have been a most satisfying entertainment of his spirit; I say, for that wretched aim, we are to this day deprived of that knowledge which man once had, which was the ornament of his nature and the repast of his soul. As all other things are subdued under a curse for sin, so especially this which man had is lost, in seeking that which he needed not;



and the tract of it is so obscured and perplexed, the footsteps of it are so indiscernible, and the way of it is like a bird in the air, or a ship in the sea, leaving us few helps to find it out, that most part of men lose themselves in seeking to find it; and therefore, in all the inquiries and searchings of men after the knowledge even of natural things that come under our view, there is at length nothing found out remarkable, but the increase of sorrow, and the discovery of ignorance, as Solomon saith, Eccles. i. 18. This is all the jewel that is brought up from the bottom of this sea, when men dive deepest into it; for the wisest of men could reach no more, though his bucket was as long as any man's, chap. vii. 23. "I said, I will be wise, but it was far from me; that which is far off and exceeding deep, who can find it out?" Knowledge hath taken a far journey from man's nature, and hath not left any prints behind it to find it out again, but, as it were, hath flown away in an instant, and therefore we may ask, with Job, chap. xxviii. ver. 1, 12, "Surely, there is a vein for the silver, &c. But where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding?" What Utopian isles is she transported unto, that mortal men, the more they seek her, they find more ignorance,—the further they pursue, they see themselves at the further distance? Thus it is in those things that are most obvious to our senses; but how much more in spiritual and invisible things is our darkness increased, because of the dullness and earthiness of our spirits that are clogged with a lump of flesh! For God himself, that should be the *primum intelligibile* of the soul, the first and principal object, whose glorious light should first strike into our hearts, Job testifies "how little a portion is known of him." When we cannot so much as understand "the thunder of his power," that makes such a sensible impression on our ears, and makes all the world to stand and hearken to it; then how much less shall we conceive the invisible Majesty of God? In natural things, we have one veil of darkness in our minds to hinder us; but in the apprehen-

sion of God, we have a twofold darkness to break through, the darkness of ignorance in us, the darkness of too much light in him—*Caliginem nimix lucis*, which makes him as inaccessible to us as the other; the overproportion of that glorious majesty of God to our low spirits, being as the sun in its brightness to a night-owl, which is dark midnight to it. Hence it is, that those holy men who know most of God, think they know least, because they see more to be known, but infinitely surpassing knowledge. Pride is the daughter of ignorance only, “and he that thinketh he knoweth anything, knoweth nothing as he ought to know,” saith the apostle, 1 Cor. viii. 2. For he that knoweth not his own ignorance, if he know never so much, is the greatest ignorant; and it is a manifest evidence that a man hath but a superficial touch of things, and hath never broken the shell, or drawn by the vail of his own weakness and ignorance, that doth not apprehend deeply the unsearchableness of God, and his mysteries; but thinketh he hath in some measure compassed them, because he maketh a system of divinity, or setteth down so many conclusions of faith, and can debate them against adversaries, or because he hath a form and model of divinity, as of other sciences, in his mind. Nay, my beloved, holy Job attained to the deepest and fullest speculation of God, when he concluded thus, “because I see thee, I abhor myself;” and as Paul speaks, “If any man love God, he is known of God, and so knows God,” 1 Cor. viii. 3. From which two testimonies I conclude, that the true knowledge of God consists not so much in a comprehension of all points of divinity, as in such a serious apprehension and conception of the divine Majesty as enkindles and inflames these two affections, love and hatred, towards their proper objects; such a knowledge as carries the torch before the affection; such “a light as shines into the heart,” as Paul’s phrase is, 2 Cor. iv. 6, and so transmits heat and warmth into it, till it make the heart burn in the love of God, and loathing of himself. As long as a man doth but hear of God in sermons, or

read of him in books, though he could determine all the questions and problems in divinity, he keeps a good conceit of himself; and “that knowledge puffeth up,” and swells a man into a vain tumour; the venom of poison blows him up full of wind and self-confidence; and commonly they who doubt least, are not the freest of error and misapprehension. And truly, whoever seriously reflects upon the difficulty of knowledge, and darkness of men’s minds, and the general curse of vanity and vexation that all things are under, so that what is wanting cannot be numbered, nor that which is crooked made straight,—he cannot but look upon too great confidence and peremptoriness in all points, as upon a race at full speed in the dark night, in a way full of pits and snares. Oftentimes our confidence flows not from evidence of truth, but the ignorance of our minds, and it is not so much built upon the strength of reason, as the strength of our passions, and weakness of our judgments.

But when once a man comes to see God, and know him in a lively manner, then he sees his own weakness and vileness in that light, and cries out with Isaiah, “Wo is me, I am a man of polluted lips;” and he discerns in that light, the amiableness and loveliness of God, that ravisheth his heart after it; and then, as Jeremiah saith, “he will not glory in riches, or strength, or beauty, or wisdom,” but only in this, that he hath at length gotten some discovery of the only fountain of happiness. Then he will not think so much of tongues and languages, of prophesyings, of all knowledge of controversies, neither gifts of body nor of mind, nor external appendancies of providence will much affect him. He would be content to trample on all these, to go over them into a fuller discovery and enjoyment of God himself.

If we search the Scriptures, we shall find that they do not entertain us with many and subtile discourses of God’s nature, and decrees, and properties, nor do they insist upon the many perplexed questions that are made concerning Christ and his offices, about which so many

volumes are spun out, to the infinite distraction of the Christian world. They do not pretend to satisfy your curiosity, but to edify your souls; and therefore they hold out God in Christ, as clothed with all his relations to mankind, in all those plain and easy properties, that concern us everlastingly,—his justice, mercy, grace, patience, love, holiness, and such like. Now, hence I gather, that the true knowledge of God, consists not in the comprehension of all the conclusions that are deduced, and controversies that are discussed anent these things; but rather, in the serious and solid apprehension of God, as he hath relation to us, and consequently in order and reference to the moving of our hearts, to love, and adore, and reverence him, for he is holden out only in those garments that are fit to move and affect our hearts. A man may know all these things, and yet not know God himself: for to know him, cannot be abstracted from loving of him,—“They that know thy name will trust in thee, and so love thee, and so fear thee;” for it is impossible but that this will be the natural result, if he be but known indeed, because there is no object more amiable, more dreadful withal, and more eligible and worthy of choice; and therefore, seeing infinite beauty and goodness, and infinite power and greatness, and infinite sufficiency and fulness, are combined together with infinite truth, the soul that apprehends him indeed, cannot but apprehend him as the most ravishing object, and the most reverend too; and, if he do not find his heart suitably affected, it is an evident demonstration that he doth not indeed apprehend him, but an idol. The infinite light, and the infinite life, are simply one, and he that truly without a dream sees the one, cannot but be warmed and moved by the other.

So then, by this account of the knowledge of God, we have a clear discovery that many are destitute of it, who pretend to it. I shall only apply it to two sorts of persons, one is, of those who have it only in their memories, another, of those who have it only in their minds or heads. Religion was once the legitimate daughter of

judgment and affection, but now, for the most part, it is only adopted by men's memories, or fancies. The greatest part of the people cannot go beyond the repetition of the catechism or creed. Not that I would have you not to know more: but you do not understand that, only ye repeat words, without the sensible knowledge of the meaning of them; so that if the same matter be disguised with any other form of words, you cannot know it, which sheweth, that you have no familiarity with the thing itself, but only with the letters and syllables that are the garments of it. And for others that are of greater capacity, yet alas! it comes not down to the heart, to the affecting, and moulding, and forming of it. A little light shines into the mind, but your hearts are shut up still, and no window in them. Corrupt affections keep that garrison against the power of the gospel, that light hath no heat of love, or warmth of affection with it, which sheweth that it is not a ray or beam of the Sun of Righteousness, which is both beautiful for light, and beneficial for influence, on the cold and dead frozen hearts of mankind, and by its approaching, makes a spring-time in the heart.

But all men pretend to know God. Such is the self-love of men's hearts, that it makes them blind in judging themselves: therefore the holy Ghost, as he designs a Christian by the knowledge of God, so he characteriseth knowledge by keeping the commandments. "Hereby we know," &c. So that religion is not defined by a number of opinions, or by such a collection of such articles of faith, but rather by practice and obedience to the known will of God; for, as I told you, knowledge is a relative duty, that is, instrumental to something else, and by anything I can see in Scripture, is not principally intended for itself, but rather for obedience. There are some sciences altogether speculative, that rest and are complete in the mere knowledge of such objects, as some natural sciences are. But others are practical, that make a further reference of all things they cognosce upon, to some practice and operation.

Now, perhaps some may think that the Scripture, or divinity, is much of it merely contemplative, in regard of many mysteries infolded in it, that seem nothing to concern our practice. I confess much of that, that is raised out of the Scriptures, is such, and therefore it seems a deviation and departure from the great scope and plain intent of the simplicity and easiness of the Scriptures, to draw forth with much industry and subtilty, many things of mere speculation and notion, dry and sapless to the affection, and unedifying to our practice, and to obtrude these upon other men's consciences, as points of religion. I rather think, that all that is in the Scriptures, either directly hath the practice of God's will for the object of it, or is finally intended for that end; either it is a thing that prescribeth our obedience, or else it tends principally to engage our affections, and secure our obedience; and so those strains of elevated discourses of God, his nature and properties of his works. and all the mysteries infolded in them, are directed towards this end, further than mere knowing of them, to engage the heart of a believer to more love, and reverence, and adoration of God, that so he may be brought more easily and steadily to a sweet compliance, and harmonious agreement to the will of God, in all his ways. Nay, to say a little more, there are sundry physical or natural contemplations of the works of God in Scripture, but all these are divinely considered, in reference to the ravishment of the heart of man, with the wisdom, and power, and goodness of God. And this shews us the notable art of religion, to extract affection and obedience to God, out of all natural contemplations; and thus true divinity engraven on the soul, is a kind of mistress science, *architectonica scientia*, that serves itself of all other disciplines, of all other points of knowledge. Be they never so remote from practice, in their proper sphere, and never so dry and barren, yet a religious and holy heart can apply them to those divine uses of engaging itself further to God and his obedience: as the Lord himself teacheth us—"Who would not fear thee, O King of nations," Jer. x; and, "fear ye not me who

have placed the sand," &c. Jer. v. 22. So "praise is extracted," Psal. cv.; and "admiration," verse 1, 33. So submission and patience under God's hand is often pressed in Job. Therefore, if we only seek to know these things that we may know them, that we may discourse on them, we disappoint the great end and scope of the whole Scriptures; and we debase and degrade spiritual things, as far as religion exalts natural things in the spiritual use. We transform it into a carnal, empty, and dead letter, as religion, where it is truly, spiritualizeth earthly and carnal things into a holy use, &c.



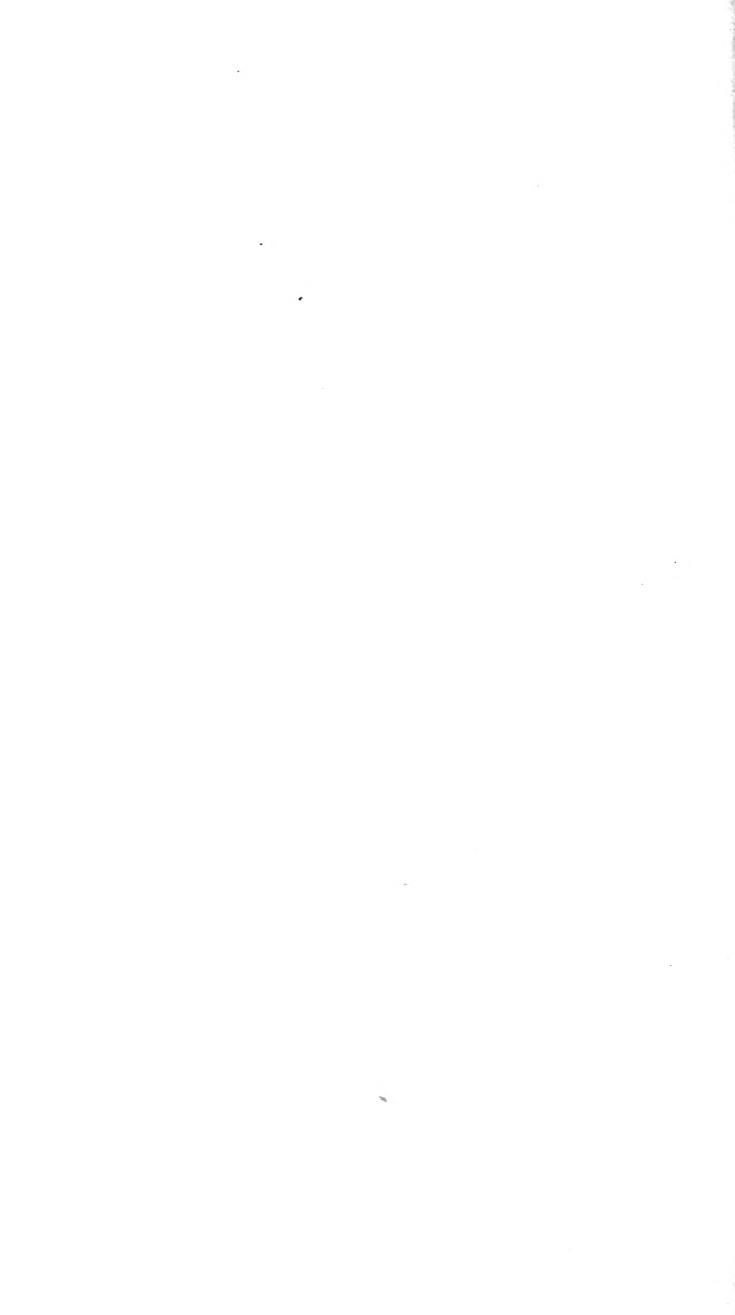


HEART-HUMILIATION:

OR,

MISCELLANY SERMONS,

PREACHED UPON SOME CHOICE TEXTS, AT  
SEVERAL SOLEMN OCCASIONS.



## TO THE READER.

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### CHRISTIAN READER,

THIS holy preacher of the gospel had so many convictions upon his spirit of the necessity of the duties of humiliation and mourning, and of people's securing the eternal interest of their souls for the life to come, by flying into Jesus Christ for remission of sins in his blood, that he made these the very scope of his sermons in many public humiliations, as if it had been the one thing which he conceived the Lord was calling for in his days: A clear evidence whereof thou shalt find manifested in these following sermons upon choice texts, wherein the author endeavoureth, not only to lay before thee the necessity of these duties of soul-humiliation, but also sheweth thee the gospel manner of performing them, the many soul-advantages flowing from the serious exercise of them, the many soul-destroying prejudices following upon the neglect of them; but above all, thou shalt find him so fully setting forth the sinfulness of sin, and the utter emptiness of self, as may convince the most pharisaically elevated spirits, and make them cry out with Ezra, chap. ix. 6, "O my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God; for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up into the heavens." Here thou mayest read such pregnant demonstrations of the righteousness and equity of the Lord's dealing, even in his severest punishments inflicted upon the children of men, as may silence every whisperer against providence, and make them

say, as Lam. iii. 22, "It is of the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, even because his compassions fail not." And lastly, thou shalt perceive the inconceivable fitness and fulness of Christ as a Saviour, and his never enough to be admired tenderness and condescending willingness to accept of humble, heart-broken, and heart-panting sinners after him; with such plainness of speech demonstrated, as may enable the most bruised reed to quench all the fiery darts of the devil, whereby he laboureth to affright them from making application to Jesus for salvation. Now that the Lord would make those and such-like labours of his faithful servants useful and advantageous to thy soul, Christian reader, is the prayer of thy servant in the Gospel of our dearest Lord and Saviour,

A. S.

# SERMONS.

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## I.

AT A PUBLIC FAST IN JULY, FIRST SABBATH, 1650.\*

Deut. xxii. 4—7.—He is the Rock, his work is perfect; for all his ways are judgment, &c.

THERE are two things which may comprehend all religion,—the knowledge of God and of ourselves. These are the principles of religion, and are so nearly conjoined together, that the one cannot be truly without the other, much less savingly. It is no wonder that Moses craved attention; and that, to the end he may attain it from an hard-hearted deaf people, he turns to the heavens and to the earth,—as it were to make them the more inexcusable. The matter of his song is both divine and necessary. Throughout it all he insists upon these two,—to discover what they were of themselves, and what God was to them. He parallels their way with his way, that they, finding the infinite distance, might have other thoughts of themselves and of him both. It is a song, it is true, but a sad song. The people of God's mourning should be of this nature,—mixed, not pure sorrow. It is hard to determine whether there be more matter of consolation or lamentation, when such a comparison is made to the life; when God's goodness and our evils are set before our eyes, which may most work the heart to such affections. Nay,

\* *Sabbath* Fasts, though they have been with much reason discountenanced in later times, were of frequent occurrence at an earlier period. The year 1650, in which this sermon was preached, is memorable in the history of Scotland for the northern campaign and execution of Montrose, the invasion of Cromwell, and the defeat of the Covenanters at Dunbar.

I think it is possible they may both contribute to both these. Is there any more abasing and humbling principle than love? How shall the sinner loath himself in his glorious presence? Will not so much kindness and mercy, so often repeated, as oft as it is mentioned, wound the heart in which there is any tenderness! And, again, when a soul beholds its own ingratitude and evil requital of the Lord's kindness, how vile and how perverse it is, how must it loath itself in dust and ashes! Yet is not all ground of hope removed. Such a sad sight may make mixed affections. If we be so perverse and evil, then he is infinitely good, and his mercy and goodness are above our evils; if we have dealt so with him, yet he is the Rock that changes not, he is a God of truth, and will not fail in his promise. Nay, though it be so sad to do evil, void of all goodness, yet may the soul bless him for evermore, that he hath chosen this way to glorify his name, to build up his praise upon our ruin. May not a soul thus glory in sad infirmities, because his strength is perfected in them, and made manifest? May not a soul choose emptiness in itself, that it may be beholden to his fulness? How refreshing a view might the saddest look on our misery and emptiness be, if we did behold his purpose of manifesting his glory in it! You see here a comparison instituted between two very unequal parties, God and man; there is no likeness, let be equality in it, yet there is almost an equality in unlikeness. The one is infinitely good and perfect; well, what shall we compare to him; "who is like thee, O God, among the gods?" Angels' goodness, their perfection and innocency, hath not such a name and appearance in his sight. So then, there can be no comparison made this way. Let no flesh glory in his sight in anything, but, "let him that glorieth, glory in the Lord," for in the sight of the glorious Lord, all things do disappear and vanish. But surely nothing, though most perfect, can once come within terms of reckoning beside him for any worth. Moses sees nothing to set beside God, that will appear in its own greatness and native colours, but the creatures' evil and sin; and if this be not infinite abso-

lutely, or equal to his goodness, yet it comes nearest the borders of infiniteness. So then, is God most perfect? Is he infinite in goodness, in truth, in righteousness, &c. And so infinite, that before him nothing appears good?—"none good save one, that is God." Yet we may find another infinite, and it is in evil sinful man; and these two contraries set beside other, do much illustrate each other. It is true that his grace superabounds, and his goodness is more than the creatures' sinfulness; yet, I say, you shall not find anything that cometh nearer the infiniteness and degrees of his goodness, than the sinfulness of men. How much the more glorious he appears, so much the more vile and base doth it appear.

If ye did indeed ponder and weigh these two verses in the balance of the sanctuary, would not your heart secretly ask this question within you, Do I thus requite the Lord, O foolish and unwise? Yea, would ye not account yourselves mad, "to forsake the fountain of living waters, and dig broken cisterns to yourselves?" O of how great moment were this to humble yourselves to-day! This day ye are called to mourning and afflicting your souls. Now, I know not a more suitable exercise for a day of humiliation, or a principle that may more humble and abase your souls, than the serious and deep consideration of these two,—what God is, and hath been to us, and what we are and have proved to him; what hath made so many formal humiliations that have provoked him to anger? Certainly we do not either seriously think on any of these, or if on one of them, yet not on both; the most part of you know no more in such a day, but a name and ceremony of a little abstinence. "Is this to sanctify a day to the Lord;"—when ye do not so much as the people who bowed down their head for a day, and spread sackcloth under them? I wonder how ye think to pacify his wrath, and are not rather afraid of adding fuel and oil to the flame of his indignation. Ye come here and sit as in former times, and what do ye more either here or at home? There is no soul-affliction, no, not for a day. The most part

of you are no more affected with your sins and his judgments, than if none of these things were. Now, I pray you, what shall the Lord say to us, when he speaks to the Jews in such terms, Isa. lviii. 5,—“ Is it such a fast as I have chosen, a day for a man to afflict his soul?” And do ye so much as afflict it for a day, or at all? Is this then the fast that he will choose, to abstain from your breakfast in the morning, and at night to compensate the want of it, and no more? Is this an acceptable day to the Lord? The Lord upbraids the Jews, “ wilt thou call this a fast?” And what reason have we to ask you, is it possible ye think ye do indeed fast to the Lord? I cannot think that the most part of you dare say, that ever ye fasted or afflicted your souls.

Always here is the way, if we consider it. To spend a day acceptably to the Lord, enter into a serious consideration of his Majesty, and yourselves. Study on these two till ye find your hearts bear the stamp of them, enlarge your hearts in the thoughts of them. Both are infinite,—his goodness and power and mercy, and your sin and misery,—no end of them. Whatever ye find good in God, write up answerably to it, so much evil and sin in yourselves and the land; and what evil ye find in yourselves and the land, write up so much goodness and mercy in his account. All the names of his praise would be so many grounds of your confusion in yourselves, and would imprint so many notes of reproach and disgrace upon the creature found so contrary to him. This is even the exercise God calls us to this day,—to consider his ways to us, and our ways to him, how he hath walked, and how we have walked. Because ye lose the sight of these two, he sends affliction,—because in our prosperity and peace we forget God, and so ourselves; as ye find this people did, “ when they waxed fat they kicked against him, and forgot that he was their Rock.” We are so much taken up with our own ease and peace, that we do not observe him in his dealings; therefore doth the Lord trouble our peace removes those things we are taken up with, makes



a public proclamation of affliction, and blessed be his name whose end is gracious. He means this,—it is the proclamation of all his judgments,—turn your eyes off your present ease here, consider what I am, and what yourselves are. No nation so soon buries the memory of his mercies, O how soon are they drowned in oblivion! and we forget our own provocations as suddenly. Therefore must he write our iniquities upon a rod, that we may read them in great letters; and he writes his former goodness in the change of his dispensations, when his way to us changes, that we may know what is past. This is the great design that God hath in the world,—to declare himself and his own name, that it may be wondered and admired at by men, and this cannot be but by our ruin, abasing us in the dust. He therefore uses to stain the pride of all glory, that his alone may appear without spot. This is then the great controversy of God with men and nations in all generations; they will not see him alone exalted, and will not bow before him, and see their own vileness. Why doth he overturn kingdoms and thrones? Why doth he shake nations so often? Here it is; God's controversy will never cease, till all men acknowledge him in his highness and holiness, as the sole fountain of all life, and find themselves vile, less than nothing, nay, worse than nothing, and emptiness. If ye would then have God at peace with the land and yourselves, here is the compendious way,—set him up a throne of eminency in your hearts, and put yourselves in the dust, take with your own guiltiness and naughtiness, and impossibility to help yourselves in yourselves. Hold these two still in your eyes, that he may be alone exalted.

Look how unequal a match, ver. 4, 5, "He is the Rock," a rock indeed; if we speak of strength, lo! he is strong, if of stability, he "is the Lord, and changes not, the Ancient of days." Hast not thou heard and considered this, that "the Almighty faints not, and wearies not?" He holds forth himself in such a name to his people, a ready, all-sufficient, perpetual, and enduring refuge to all that

trust in him, and fly unto him as a rock higher than they. And this is the foundation that the church is builded on, "against which the gates of hell shall not prevail,"—God's omnipotency for defence, his eternity, faithfulness, and unchangeableness to make that sure. His mercy and goodness makes a hole in that rock to enter in, a ready access for poor shipwrecked and broken men, who have no other refuge. This is our rock, on which the church is builded, "Jesus Christ," 1 Cor. x. 4. Matt. xvi. 18. God were inaccessible in himself, an impregnable rock; how would sinners overcome him, and enter in to him to be saved from wrath? Nay, but Jesus Christ hath made a plain way and path, out of the waves of sin and misery, into this rock higher than we; and so the poor soul that is lost in its own eyes, and sees no refuge, is forced to quit the broken ship of created confidence, for fear of perishing; how doth it find a door in this rock to enter? And there is water to drink of, "a fountain of living waters" comes out of it, and that "is Christ."

Now, all these names of his praise rub so many marks of shame on his people. O how sad is the secret reproof and expostulation contained in this commendation of God! He hath been a rock to us, our refuge that we fled unto, and found sure; for as, in our straits, we mounted upon his power and were supported, when "the floods lifted up their waves," yet have we left our rock, gone out from our strength. He offers himself a rock unto us, his fulness and all-sufficiency for us, "and yet we leave the fountain of living waters, and dig broken cisterns," had rather choose our own broken ships in which to toss up and down. He abides for ever the same; though we change, he changes not. How may it reprove our backslidings, that we depart from our rock, and where shall we find a refuge in the day of indignation? Is there any created mountain, but some floods of the time will cover? Therefore it is folly and madness to forsake this rock that is still above the floods; "he is mightier than the noise of many waters." It may reprove our unbelief,—we change

our faith according to the dispensation, our faith ebbs and flows as the tide of his providence, and thus we are as sticks floating in the water, tossed up and down. But would ye be established as mount Sion? Would ye be unmoveable in the midst of great waters, that they shall not come near unto you? Then, by all means get upon this rock, that abides unmoved in the midst of the waves. Though they should beat on it, and the wind blow, yet it is proof of all tempests. All things might be driven up and down about you with the Lord's dispensation, but ye should abide the same, and might look round about you on the troubled sea of men's minds, of lands and estates. If you come here, ye may make shipwreck, but ye shall not drown; though ye lose the creature's comfort and defence, yet ye are on your rock, which is established before the rocks and mountains. You may be sure of salvation. He that made the rocks and winds and seas, is your rock.

“His work is perfect.” As he doth not trouble himself when all is troubled about him, “so he keeps him also in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on him;” so also what he doth among men, though it cannot pass without man's censure, yet it is in itself perfect, complete, without spot or defect. What is the subject of all men's questions, doubts, complaints, censures, expostulations, and such like, of which the world is full? It is some one work of God or other; there is no work of his providence, but some man finds a fault in it, and would be at the mending of it. *Neque Deus cum pluit, omnibus placet*: if he give rain, he displeases many, if he withhold it again, we are as little pleased. The reason of all this mis-construction is, we look on his work by parcels, and take it not whole and entire, for thus it is perfect, and cannot be made better. “His works are perfect,” in relation to the beginning and original of them, his own everlasting purpose. Men often bring forth works by guess, by their purpose, so no wonder it answer not their desire; but “known to him are all his works from the beginning,” and so he doth nothing in time, but what was his everlasting pleasure. Often we purpose

well, and resolve perfectly, but our practice is a cripple, execution of it is maimed and imperfect ; but all his works are carved out, and done just as he designed them, without the least alteration ; and, if it had not been well, would he have thought on it so, and resolved it beforehand ? His works are perfect, in relation to the end to which he appointed them. It may be it is not perfect in itself: a blind eye is not so perfect as a seeing eye ; nay, but in relation to the glory of his name, who hath a purpose to declare his power by restoring that sight, it is as perfect. And in this sense, all the imperfections of the creature and creation, all of them are perfect works, for they accomplish the end wherefore they were sent ; and so the night declares his name, and utters a speech as well as the day, the winter as the summer, the wilderness as the fruitful field. For what is the perfection of the creature, but in as far as it accomplishes his purpose and end, as the maker of it serves himself with it ? And therefore all his work is perfect, for it is all framed in wisdom to his own ends, in number, measure, and weight ; it is so exactly agreeing to that, that you could not imagine it better. Again, "his work is perfect," if we take it altogether, and do not cut it in parcels, and look on it so. Is there any workmanship beautiful, if ye look upon it in the doing, while the timber lies in one part and the stones in another ? Is that a perfect building, when ye see one arm here, another there, and a leg scattered beside them ? Hath that image any comeliness ? Certainly no ; but look upon these united, and then they are perfect. Letters and syllables make no sense, till ye conjoin them in words, and words in sentences. Even so is it here ; if ye look on the day alone, the light of it being perpetual would weary us, the night alone would be more so ; but the interchange of them is pleasant,—day and night together make a distinct language of God's praise. So God hath set prosperity and adversity the one over against the other. One of them, it may be, seems imperfect ; nay, but it is a perfect work that is

made up of both. Spots in the face commend the beauty of the rest of it.

If ye would then look upon God's work aright, look on it in the sanctuary's light, and ye shall say, "He hath done all well." Join the end with the beginning, and behold they agree very well. Many things among us seem out of order, many things uncomplete. The reformation of England, how great obstruction was in the way of it? Is that now a perfect work? Yes, certainly; if we know his end and purpose, it is very well, and could not be bettered by the art of all men; "his thoughts are far above our thoughts." The prosperous and uninterrupted success of that party in England, is it a perfect work? Yes, certainly; for if ye could behold their end, ye would say so; "they are set in slippery places, their foot shall slide in due time."

Entertain this thought in your heart, that he hath done all well. Let not your secret thoughts so much as call them in question. If once ye question, ye will quickly censure them. Hold this persuasion, that nothing can be better than what he doth, nothing can be added, and nothing diminished from them,—he doth all in number, weight, and measure. It is so exactly correspondent to his purpose and design, as if it were weighed out, and measured out for that end.

Let this secretly reprove your hearts. The perfection of his works stain our works; O how imperfect are they! And which is worse, how impudent and bold are we to censure his, and absolve our own? If he have a hand in our work, yet these imperfect works are perfect in regard of him. As we have a hand in his perfect works, yet his perfect works are imperfect in regard of us.

## II.

Deut. xxxii. 4, 5.—He is the Rock, his work is perfect; for all his ways are judgment; a God of truth, and without iniquity; just and right is he. They have corrupted themselves; their spot is not the spot of his children, &c.

THERE are none can behold their own vileness as it is, but in the sight of God's glorious holiness. Sin is darkness, and neither sees itself, nor any thing else, therefore must his light shine to discover this darkness. If we abide within ourselves, and men like ourselves, we cannot wisely judge ourselves; our dim sparkle will not make all the imperfections and spots appear. But, if men would come forth into the presence of his Majesty, who "turns darkness into light," and before whom all is naked,—O how base and vile would they appear in their own eyes! Is it any wonder that the multitude of you see not yourselves, when holy Isaiah and Job had this lesson to learn? Isaiah gets a discovery of his own uncleanness in the sight of God's glorious holiness, chap. vi. 5, which I think made all his former light darkness. He cries out "unclean," as if he had never known it before; and so Job, "Since I saw thee I abhorred myself in dust and ashes." Ye hear much of him, and it doth not abase you; but if ye saw him, ye would not abide yourselves; ye would prefer the dust you tread on to yourselves. Ye who know most, there is a mystery of iniquity in your hearts, that is not yet discerned, ye are but yet on the coast of that bottomless sea of abomination and vileness. Among all the aggravations of sin, nothing doth so demonstrate the folly, yea, the madness of it, as the perfection, goodness, and absolute unspottedness of God. It is this that takes away all pretence of excuse, and leaves it nothing,—no place in which to hide its confusion and nakedness and shame. And therefore is it that Moses, when he would convince this people of their ways, and make them inexcusable, draws the parallel of God's ways and their ways, declares

what God is, how absolutely perfect in himself, and in his works, and that he had given no cause of provocation to them to depart from him: and then, how odious must their departing be! When both are painted on a board before their eyes, it makes sin become exceeding sinful. When the Lord would pierce the hearts of his people, and engrave a challenge with the point of a diamond, he useth this as his pen,—“Have I been a wilderness to Israel, a land of darkness? Why say my people, we are lords, we will come no more to thee?” Jer. ii. 31. “What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone from me, and walked after vanity?”

There are two things in sin that exceedingly abuse the creature,—the iniquity of it, and the folly and madness of it. It is contrary to all equity and reason to depart from him that hath made us, and given us a law, to whom we are by so many obligations tied; but what is the folly and madness of it, to “depart from the fountain of living waters, and dig broken cisterns that can hold none?” verse 13. This is a thing that the heavens may be astonished at; and, if the earth had sense to understand such a thing, the whole fabric of it would tremble for horror at such madness and folly of reasonable souls; and this evil hath two evils in it,—we forsake life and love death, go from him and chuse vanity. It is great iniquity to depart without an offence on his part; he may appeal to all our consciences, and let them sit down and examine his way most narrowly,—“what iniquity have ye found in me?” What cause have ye to leave me! But when withal he is a living fountain, he is our glory, he is a fruitful land, a land of light, our ornament and attire, in a word, our life and our consolation, our happiness and our beauty; what word shall be found, to express the extreme madness of men to depart from such an one, and change their glory into that which doth not profit? If either he were not a fountain of living water, or if there were any fountain beside, that could yield water to satisfy the unsatiable desires of men, it were more excusable; but what shadow shall be found

to cover such an iniquity that is both infinite sin, and incomparable loss? It is the Scripture's style given to natural men, "fools and simple." All sin hath folly in it, but the people of God's departing from him hath extremity of folly in it, beside iniquity, because they do embrace a dunghill instead of a throne; they make the maddest exchange that can be imagined, glory for shame, life for death,—at least, consolation and peace, for vanity and vexation and anguish of spirit.

If ye would be duly affected with the sight of your own evils, look upon them in this consideration, and, in the view of God, your large portion, ye will be forced to confess yourselves "beasts in his sight," Psal. lxxiii. 22. Oh! that men would consider how good and blessed the Lord is, who is alone, and nothing beside him in heaven and earth,—all broken cisterns, all dung and unprofitable, all vanity and vexation,—he only self sufficient, all others insufficient; and therefore a proportioned good for our necessity and desires; and I am sure ye would be constrained to cry out with David, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, or in the earth beside thee? It is good for me to draw near to God." Ye would look on drawing near, and walking with him, and before him, not only as the most reasonable thing, but the best thing, most beautiful for you most profitable for you, and all other ways would be looked on as the ways of death.

"His work is perfect." The Lord looked, and behold all was good that was made. So it was at first. The fabric of this world was an exquisite and perfect work, a suitable demonstration of his infinite wisdom, wonderful in all the parts of it, and in the unity and harmony of the whole. But so also his work of providence is perfect. Divine wisdom hath framed and contrived all, and it cannot be better. If any thing seem imperfect in itself, yet it is perfect in relation to his glorious ends he directs it unto. And so would we look on all the works among us. If any thing seemed a spot and disgrace of the creation, certainly the sin of men and angels;—nay, but even



that is so ordered by his holy sovereignty, that in relation to his majesty, it may be called a perfect work. If ye do but consider what a glorious high throne he hath erected to himself for justice and judgment to be the habitation of it, and mercy and truth to go before it, upon the ruins of defaced man; what a theatre of justice he hath erected upon the angels' fall, ye would call it as perfect a work as is in the world. His work is one in the world, subordinate to one great design of manifesting his own glorious justice and mercy, omnipotency and wisdom. Now what do ye see of it but parcels? Though ye comprehend all your time in one thought, yet certainly ye cannot judge it aright; for it is but one work that all the several buildings and castings down, all the several dispensations of his providence, from the beginning to the end, make up; and when we think upon these disjoined, limit our consideration within the bounds of our own time, can we rightly apprehend it? Nay, which is worse, we use to have no more within the compass of our thought, but some present thing, and how much more do we err then? What beauty, what perfection can such a small part have? But it is present to him, who beholds with a glance all these parts. Though succeeding in many generations, he sees it altogether, joins the end with the beginning, sees the first mould, the first foundation stone, and the last completing, all flowing from himself, and returning thither, and ending in himself. He hath made an interchange in nature, which might teach us;—the night alone hath no beauty. Nay, but it beautifies the day. Your darkest hours and tempests, public and personal, are they perfect works? Yes, certainly, if ye compound them with your sunshines and calms. Several colours make pictures beautiful,—the one is as needful as the other; and if ye did consider your profit more than your honour and pleasure, ye would say so. He doth not model his works according to our fancy to please us, but our good to profit us, and he is wiser than we; and so then it is the most perfect work in itself, that possibly displeaseth us most

Therefore ye would judge of his dealing by another rule than your own satisfaction ; for please you and perish you. If he spared the rod, he should hate us indeed ; fond love is real hatred. Christians, if ye would judge his works by his word, and not by your sense,—by your well, and not by your will, certainly ye would say, as the men did of Christ, “he hath done all well.” The world would discover to you a perfection, even in imperfection, a perfection in infirmities, that ye should not only rejoice in them, but glory in them ; “most gladly therefore will I glory,” &c. saith Paul. Are infirmities a perfect work ? Or is the suffering of Paul, to be buffeted and tempted, a perfect work ? What comfort is in it ? Yes, much. Infirmities alone are infirmities indeed ; nay, but infirmities in me, and strength in Jesus ; weakness in me, and strength dwelling in me,—these make up one perfect work, that could as little want the infirmities as the strength. The glory of God, and our well and consolation, require the one, as well as the other ; they could not be complete without any of them. What do ye think of the times now ? Are England’s apostacy, and Ireland’s desolation, perfect works ? That great work of reformation, that seemed to be above our shoulders, it is now razed to the ground, and the very foundations removed ? Is deformation a perfect work ? Certainly, if we look on these things in the Scripture’s light, and consider them in relation to him who is the chief builder, and doth in heaven and earth what he pleaseth ; that deformation is a perfect work, though not a perfect reformation. Though we could not inform you of the perfection of it, yet the general might silence us ; all this shall be no miss, no mar in the end. His work, at the end of accounts, shall appear so complete, as if it had never had interruption. He is wise, and knows what he doth ; if this were not for his glory and his people’s good, certainly it should not be. Were not the people’s wandering in the wilderness forty years a most strange work—a longer interruption of the expected and begun voyage out of Egypt ? What human

reason would have stiled this work with perfection? Did they not often murmur against it? Yet Moses calls this a perfect work also. What if the Lord be digging the ground deeper in England, that the foundation may be the surer? What if he be on a work of judgment, filling the cup of many deluded blasphemers, that he may have another cup of wrath prepared? What if this be his great purpose, to execute vengeance upon a profane generation, that will not abide the very name and form of godliness, by those who pretend to the name of it as their honour? What if the Lord hath defaced all that this kingdom was instrumental in building of in England, that he alone may have the glory in a second temple more glorious? Many things there may be in his mind; and "he is in one mind, and who can turn him?" and what his soul desireth, even that he doth; and this may be enough to satisfy us, "he sees and knows all his works from the beginning."

And without all controversy he hath provided it so, that the reproach of his name shall be made up with the more shining of his glory, and the afflictions of his people shall be compensated with songs of deliverance. May ye not give him so much credit, as ye would give to a skilful man in his own trade? Ye know it is his name, "excellent in counsel, and wonderful in working;" then take his work, expound it according to his word, and not your apprehension. It may be his work appears not excellent; nay, but if ye knew his counsel, ye would think it so. His wonderful counsel makes all his works excellent; and therefore do not take upon you to judge his works, unless ye could wade the depth of his counsels, else ye declare yourselves to be both ignorant and presumptuous. "There is a time to build, and a time to cast down; a time for every thing," saith the wise man; now, I say, he knows the time and season, he does every thing in his time. If ye come by a workman that is casting down a house that in your appearance seems good, would ye condemn him presently? No, but stay till ye see what he will do next,

wait till the due time, and when ye see a better piece of workmanship on that ground, ye shall absolve him. Though God often change his work, do not think he changes his counsel and purposes as men do ; no, "he is in one mind, and who can turn him ?" Therefore he had that change in his mind when he made the work ; when he erected such a throne, he had this in his mind to cast it down within such a space, and so his change—his throwing down—is as perfect in his mind, as his building up. Ye have large and big apprehensions of temporal kingdoms and crowns of government, and such like, as if they were great, yea, only things, but they are not so to him. All this world and its standing, all the kingdoms and their affairs are not his great work and business. He hath a great work, "the bringing of many sons to glory," and the completing of Jesus Christ ; building of that glorious mystical building, the holy temple made up of living stones, of which Christ is the foundation, and chief corner-stone both ; and it is this that he attends to most. Other works among men, though they have more noise, they are less concerned. All these are but in the by, and subservient to his great design, and like the scaffolds of a building, that are, it may be, sometimes very needful. Nay, but when the building is completed, he shall remove all these, he hath no more use of them ; "kings shall be thy nurse-fathers, kings shall bow to thee." He is not much concerned in government nor in governors, but for his little flock's sake ; and if these were gathered, all these shall have an end, and the flock alone abide for ever.

"And all his ways are judgment." This is to the same purpose,—his ways and his works are one. And this is the perfection of his work, that it is all right and equal ; whether they be in justice or mercy, they are all righteous and holy, no iniquity in them ; his ways are straight and equal, exact as if they were measured by an exact even rule ; but because we make application of a crooked rule to them, we do imagine that they are crooked ; as the blind man judges no light to be, because he sees it not.

How may the Lord contend and plead with us, as with that people, Ezek. xviii. 25. Is it possible that any can challenge him and clear themselves, "who will be justified of all when he is judged, and before whom no flesh can be justified?" And yet behold the iniquity of men's hearts. There is a secret reflection of our spirits upon his Majesty, as if his ways were not equal, whenever we repine against them, and when we do not take with our iniquity, and stop our mouths with dust. Behold, the Lord will assert his own ways, and plead with all flesh this controversy, that all his proceedings are full of equity. He walks according to a rule, though he be not tied to a rule. He walks according to the rules of wisdom, justice, and mercy, though his illimited sovereignty might be a sufficient ground of clearing of all his proceedings. But we walk not according to a rule, though we be bound to a rule, and a rule full of equity.

Here is the equity and justness of his ways, the gospel holds it forth in a two-fold consideration. *First*, If any man turn from his iniquity, and flee unto my Son as the city of refuge, "he shall live, he hath eternal life;" iniquity shall not be his ruin, although he hath done iniquity. "O who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity!" Is not this complete mercy? Whatever iniquity hath been, aggravate it as ye can, though it could have ruined a world, yet it could not have ruined thee that turnest in to Jesus Christ from iniquity. What exception can all the world have against this, or his walking according to it? And on the other hand, whosoever continueth in sin, though he appear to himself and others never so righteous; if he entertain and love any known sin, and will not part with it for Jesus Christ, "shall not he die in his iniquity?" Is there any iniquity in this, that he receive the wages of his works—his reward? that he eat of the fruit of his own ways, and drink of his own devices? But how many hearts censure this way as a rigid and strict severe dealing. The multitude think it cruelty to condemn any christened soul—to put so many

in hell ; the civil man will think it is too hard measure that he should be ranked in hell with the profane. But certainly, all mouths shall be stopped one day, and "he shall be justified when he judges." Ye that will not justify him in his sayings, and set to your seal to the truth of the word, you shall be constrained to justify him, when he executes that sentence. Ye shall precipitate your own sentence, and rather wonder at his clemency in suffering you so long.

This way of the Lord is equal and right in itself, but it is not so to every one. "The just man shall walk in it and not stumble;" as in an even way, nothing shall offend him, Hosea xiv. last ver. Yet for as equal and straight as it is, many other transgressors shall fall therein ; they stumble even in the noon-day and high-way, where no offence is. It is true, often his own people stumble in it, as David, Psal. lxxiii. and xciv. "David's foot was slipping," yet a secret hold was by mercy. It often requires a wise and prudent man to understand it, because "his footsteps are in the deep waters," Psal. lxxvii. 19. "His way is in the depths of the sea, his paths in great waters," so that men must wait till the Lord expound his own ways, till he come out of the waters, and make them a dry plain. And this is our advantage; the word says, "he is near thee, in thy mouth, and neither above, nor beneath in the depths, that thou needest neither descend nor ascend to know it," Deut. xxx. 11—14. But his way is in the depths, and his footsteps are not known, so that we ought to hold us by the word till he expound his work. His word will teach us our duty, and we may commit unto him his own way; the word is a commentary to expound his ways. David lost the sight of God's footsteps and was like to wander, till he came to the sanctuary, and this shined as a candle in a dark place; he learned there to know the unknown footsteps and to follow them. By all means embrace the word, and be satisfied with it, when ye do not comprehend his work; it teaches as much in general, as may put us to quietness; all his ways are

judgment, just and true in all his ways, is the King of saints. If I do not comprehend how it is,—no wonder, for he makes darkness his covering, he spreads over his most curious engines and pieces of workmanship, a vail of darkness for a season ; and “ who can behold him when he hides himself,” says Job ; and though he withdraw the covering, yet what am I ? “ Who can by searching find out God ? ” If I shall examine his way, what rule shall I take to try it by ? If I measure by my shallow capacity, or by my crooked way, shall I have any just account of it ? Will my arm measure the heavens as his doth ? If I examine it, or try it by himself, “ He is high as heaven and unsearchable.” Therefore it becomes us to hearken to his word, and believe its sentence of his work, when reason cannot comprehend it.

One thing, if it were deeply engraven on our hearts, would be a principle, of settling our spirits, in all the mysteries and riddles of providence,—the knowledge and faith of his sovereignty, of his highness, and of his wisdom. Should he give account of his matters to us ? He is wise and knows his works ; but is he bound to make us know them ? “ His ways are above our thoughts and ways, as heaven is above the earth,” Isa. lv. And therefore, O grasshopper in the earth, that dwelleth in tabernacles of clay, do not presume to model his ways according to thy conceptions. One thing is certain,—this is enough for faith, “ all his ways are mercy and truth to those that keep his covenant and his testimonies,” Psal. xxv. 10. And there is no way or path of God so far above our reach, and unsearchable, as his mercy in pardoning sin ; and this is only the satisfying answer to all your objections and scruples. In these ye do but vent your own thoughts : but says the Lord, “ my thoughts are above your thoughts, as heaven above earth.” Ye but speak of your own ways, but my ways are far above yours, they are not measured by your iniquity ; and therefore, David subjoins, Psal. xxv. ver. 11. “ Pardon my iniquity, for it is great.”

## III.

Deut. xxxii. 4, 5.—He is the rock, his work is perfect. For all his ways are judgment. A God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he. They have corrupted themselves, their spot is not the spot of his children. They are a perverse and crooked generation.

“ALL his ways are judgment,” both the ways of his commandments and the ways of his providence, both his word which he hath given as a lantern to men’s paths, and his works among men. And this were the blessedness of men, to be found walking in his ways, and waiting on him in his ways, having respect to all his commandments, and respect to himself in all his works. We all know in general that he doth all well, and that all his commandments are holy and just. Nay, but our practice and affections belie our knowledge; and for the most part, we stand cross in our humours, and affections, and conversation, both to his word and providence, and this is our misery: “great peace have they that love thy law.” What peace then can keep that heart and mind that is daily at variance with his statutes and judgments; when the heart would wish such a command were not, when it is an eye-sore to look upon it? “Blessed are the meek; it is good for a man, both quietly to wait, and hope, and keep silence.” How then must that Spirit be miserable, that stands cross unto God’s dispensations, and would limit the Holy One! Do not your hearts often say, “I do well to be angry, why is it thus with me?” But, “who hath hardened himself against him and prospered? “His counsel must stand;” and you may vex yourself, and disquiet your soul in the meantime, by impatience, but you cannot by your thoughts add one cubit to your stature. You may make your case worse than providence hath made it, but you cannot make it better by so doing, so that at length, you must bow to him



or be broken. Oh! then that this were engraven on our hearts with the point of a diamond! "All his ways are judgment;" that ye might be overcome with the equity of his command and dispensation, and your heart and tongue might not move against them. It was enough of old with the saints, "It is the Lord, let him do what seems good in his eyes." God's sovereignty alone pondered, may stop our mouth; but, if ye withal consider, it is perfect equity that rules all, it is divine wisdom that is the square of his works; then how ought we to stoop cheerfully unto them. One thing, ye would remember, his ways and paths are judgment, and if ye judge aright of him, ye must judge his ways and not his single footsteps. Ye will not discern equity and judgment in one step or two; but consider his way, join adversity with prosperity, humbling with exalting; take along the thread of his providence, and one part shall help you to understand another. There is reason in all, but the reason is not visible to us in so small parts of his way and work.

"A God of truth." Strange it is that his majesty is pleased to clothe himself with so many titles and names for us. He considers what our necessity is, and accordingly expresses his own name. I think nothing doth more hold forth the unbelief of men, and atheism of our hearts, than the many several titles that God takes in Scripture. There is a necessity of a multitude of them, to make us take up God; because we, staying upon a general notion of God, rather frame in our imaginations an idol than the true God. As there is nothing doth more lively represent the unbelief of our hearts, than the multitude of promises; men that consider such frequent repetitions of one thing in Scripture, so many divers expressions of one God, may retire into their own hearts, and find the cause of it, even the necessity of it. But while we look so slightly on these, we must judge it superfluous and vain. Needed there any more to be said, but, "I am your God, I am God," if our spirits were not so far degenerated unto atheism and unbelief? Certainly

that word *Jehovah* holds forth more to angels than all the inculcated names and titles of God to us, because we are dull and slow of heart. Therefore wonder at these two when ye read the Scriptures, God's condescendency to us, and our atheism and unbelief of him: they are both mysteries, and exceeding broad. There is not a name of God, but it gives us a name, and that of reproach and dishonour. so that for every one, some evil may be written down. And it is to this purpose Moses draws them out in length, that in the glass of his glorious name, the people may behold their own ugly face. This name is clear, "he is a God of truth," not only a true God, but truth itself; to note his excellency and eminency in it. It is Christ's name, "I am the truth," the substantial truth, "in whom all the promises are truth, are yea, and amen." His truth is his faithfulness in performing his promises, and doing what his mouth hath spoken: and this "is established in the very heavens," Psal. lxxxix. 2. His everlasting purpose is in heaven where he dwells; and if any man can ascend up to heaven; if any creature can break through the clouds, then may his truth be shaken. His word comes down among men; nay, but the foundation of it is in heaven, and there is his purpose established; and therefore, there is nothing done in time can impair or hinder it. Ye think this world very sure; the earth hangs unmoveable, though it hang upon nothing. All the tumults, confusions, and reels which have been in the world, have never moved it to the one side. Heaven goeth about in one tenure perpetually, keeping still the same distance. Nay, but his truth is more established than so. Heaven and earth depend but upon a word of command; he hath said, "Let it be so," and "so it is." Nay, but his word is more established. Of it saith Christ, "one jot or tittle of it cannot fail, though heaven and earth should fail." He may change his commands as he pleases, but he may not change his promise; this puts an obligation on him, as he is faithful and true, to perform it; and when an oath is superadded, O how immutable

are these two!—when he promises in his truth, and swears in his holiness. Is there any power in heaven and earth can break that double cord? Mat. v. 18; Heb. vi. 13. There is no name of God but it is comfortable to some, and as terrible to others. What comfort is it to a godly man that trusts in his word, “he is a God of truth!” An honest man’s word is much; his oath is more. What shall his word be, who is a God of truth? Who, though all men should be liars, yet God is true. Ye who have ventured your souls on his word, ye have an unspeakable advantage; “his truth endures for ever, and it is established in the heavens;” the ground of it is without beginning, the end of it without end. Ye are more sure than the frame of heaven and earth, “for all these shall wax old as a garment.” We speak of a naked word of truth; indeed it is no naked word that is God’s word. His works of providence, and his dispensation to you, is a naked and bare foundation, nay, a sandy foundation, and ye who lean so much to them, is it any wonder, ye so often shake and waver? All other grounds beside the word are uncertain, unstable; this only endures for ever. The creature’s goodness and perfection is but as the grass, and the flower of the field. Venture not much on your dispositions and frames; thou knowest not what a day may bring forth: but his truth is to all generations, and it is well tried, as gold seven times,—all generations have tried it, and found it better than pure gold. His dispensations are arbitrary,—no rule to you. He loveth to declare his sovereignty here, and to expatiate in the creature’s sight beyond its conceiving; but he hath limited himself in his word, and come down to us, and laid bonds on himself. Will he then untie them for us? Give him liberty where he loves it; take him bound where he binds himself. How may God expostulate with this generation, as those of little faith? “How long shall I be with you,” saith Christ? How long will Christians tempt the Lord in seeking signs; and will not rest upon his only word and promises? “O adulterous generation,

how long shall I be with you, and ye will not believe?" Is it not righteousness in him, either to give you no sign at all, or to give you a sign darker than the thing itself, as he did to the Pharisees. Ye will give credit to a man's word, and will ye not believe God's. An honest man will get more trust of us, than the true and living God. Shall he not be offended with this? We declare it unto you, that he is truth itself, and will not fail in his promise: let that be your castle and refuge to enter into. Mercy and truth are two sweet companions to go along with you in your pilgrimage. David prayed for them, Psal. lxi. 7. "O prepare thy mercy and truth to preserve me." Who will not lie safe within these everlasting arms? What power can break through them? And this he promised to himself, Psal. lvii. 3. "God shall send them out." Mercy made so many precious promises, and truth keeps them. Mercy is the fountain and source of all our consolation, and truth and faithfulness convey it to us, and keep it for us. It is these two that go before his face, when he sits on a throne of majesty, and makes himself accessible to sinners, Psalm lxxxix. 14. and so they are the path-way he walks in towards those who seek him, Psalm xxv. 10.

But this sweet and precious name, that is as ointment poured forth to those who love him, how doth it smell of death to those who walk contrary to him? "He is a God of truth," to execute his threatenings on those who despise his commands; and though ye flatter yourselves in your own eyes, and cry, "Peace, peace, even though ye walk in the imagination of your own heart;" yet certainly "he is a God of truth." I pray you read that sad and weighty word, that will be like a millstone about many men's necks, to sink them in hell, Deut. xxix. 20, 21. "Ye who add drunkenness to thirst," whose rule of walking is your own lust, and whatsoever pleaseth you, without respect of his commands, and yet flatter yourselves with a dream of peace; know this for a truth, "the Lord will not spare thee, he that made thee will not have mercy

on thee." His jealousy will smoke against thee, and all the curses written in this book shall lye upon thee, and thy name shall be blotted out from under heaven. It was unbelief of God's threatening that first ruined man ; it is this still that keeps so many from the remedy, and makes their misery irrecoverable. The serpent brought them to this question, "Hath God said ye shall die." And then presently the question entertained becometh a conclusion, "Ye shall not surely die." Thus ye see how the liar, from the beginning, was contrary to the God of truth; and he murdered us by lying of that God of truth, and it is the same that shuts out all hope of remedy. Ye do not as yet believe and consider that curse that was pronounced against Adam, but is now also inflicted upon us: therefore, there is no solid belief can be of the promises of the gospel; and ye who think ye believe the gospel, do but indeed fancy it, except ye have considered the true curse of God on all flesh. But if any man have set to his seal that God is true in the threatening, and subscribed unto the law, then, I beseech you, add not the unbelief of the gospel unto your former disobedience. "He is a God of truth," in promises and threatenings. It is strange how untoward and froward we are,—a perverse generation. We do not believe his threatenings, but fancy we receive his promises, or else, believing his threatenings, we question his promises. But know this for a truth, his last word is more weighty; and the unbelief of it is most dangerous. Ye have not kept his commands, and so the curse is come upon you: Do ye believe that? If ye do, then the gospel speaks unto you; the God of truth hath one word more, "He that believes shall be saved," notwithstanding of all his breaking of the law. If ye do not set your seal to this also, then ye say he is not a God of truth; ye say he is a liar. And as for you who have committed your souls to him, as to a faithful keeper, and acquiesced unto his word of promise for salvation, think how unsuitable it is for you to distrust him in other lesser things. Ye have the promise of this life, whoever hath the promises of the life to come. Therefore do not

make him a liar in these. "He is a God of truth," and will let you want no good thing. "Say to the righteous it shall be well with him," whatever be. Let heaven and earth mix through other, yet ye may be as mount Sion unmoved in the midst of many floods, because of the promises.

"Without iniquity." Who doubts of that, say ye? What needs this be added? who charges him with iniquity or sin? Nay, but stay and consider, and you shall find great weight in this. It is true none dare charge him openly, or speak in express terms against his holiness, yet, if we judge of our own and other's practices and dispositions, as the Lord useth to construct of them; if we resolve our murmurings, impatience, self-absolutions and excuses to hold off convictions, into plain language; if we would translate them into a Scripture-stile; certainly it will be found that the most part of men, if not all, use to impute iniquity to God, and accuse him rather than take with accusations laid against themselves. And therefore the Lord useth to go to law with his people. He who is the judge of the world, that cannot do unrighteousness, "he who is the potter, and we all clay;" yet so far condescends to us for convincing us, as sometimes to refer the controversy between him and his people to other creatures, as Micah vi. 12. He calls the mountains and the foundations of the earth to judge between him and his people; and sometimes he appeals unto their own consciences, and is content, though judge, to stand and be judged by those who were guilty, as ver. 3. and Jer. ii. 31. All this supposes, that when the Lord would endeavour to convince them of iniquity, they did rather recriminate, and took not with their own faults. This is a truth generally acknowledged by all, "He who is the judge of the world doth no iniquity;" but O! that ye considered it, till the meditation of it were engraven on your spirits, the seal of God's holiness, that ye might fear before him, and never call him to account for his matters. Who can say I have purged my heart from iniquity? Among men the holiest are defiled with it, and so are all their actions. But here

is one that ye may give him an implicit faith, so to speak, "he is a God of truth," and can speak no lie, "he does no iniquity," and cannot do wrong to any man. Would there be so much impatience amongst you, and fretting against his dispensations, if ye believed this solidly? Would ye repine against his holy and just ways, were it not to charge God with iniquity? Your murmuring and grudging at his dispensations is with child of blasphemies, and he who can search the reins sees it, and constructs so of it. You say by interpretation, that if ye had the government of your own matters, or of kingdoms, ye would order them better than he doth. How difficult a thing is it to persuade men to take with their own iniquity? O how many excuses and pretences, how many extenuations are used that this conviction may not pierce deeply? But all this speaks so much blasphemy,—that iniquity is in God. Ye cannot take with your own iniquities, but ye charge his majesty with iniquity.

"Just and right is he." Is this any new thing; was it not said already, that he is "without iniquity," and his ways judgment? But, alas! how ignorant are we of God, and slow of heart to conceive of him as he is, therefore is there "line upon line, and precept upon precept," and name upon name, if it be possible, that at length we may apprehend God as he is. Alas! our knowledge is but ignorance, our light darkness, while it is shut up in the corner of our mind, and shines not into the heart, and hath no influence on our practice. And the truth is, the belief of divine truths is almost no more but a not contradicting them; we do not seriously think of them as either to consent to them, or deny them. Is there any consideration amongst us now of God's justice and righteousness, though it be frequently spoken of? And what advantage shall we have if ye do not consider them? O how hard is it to persuade men's hearts of this, that God is just, and will by no means acquit the guilty? There are so many delusions drunk in in men's hearts, contrary to his truth. "Let no man deceive you; be not deceived with vain words; know ye

not," saith our apostle. These are strange prefaces. Would ye not think the point of truth subtle that there needed so much prefacing unto it? and yet what is it? Even that which all men grant,—God's wrath comes on the children of disobedience; but, alas! few men consider, but deceive themselves with dreams of escaping it. Though men know it yet they know it not, for they walk as if they knew no such thing.

Although however this is of little moment to affect our spirits now, yet in the day that God shall set our iniquities before our face, and set his justice also before our eyes O how sad and serious a thing will it be then! If these two verses were engraven on our hearts,—God's justice and holiness, our corruption and vileness,—I think there would be other thoughts among us than there are.

#### IV.

Deut. xxxii. 5.—They have corrupted themselves: their spot is not the spot of his children, &c.

WE doubt this people would take well with such a description of themselves as Moses gives. It might seem strange to us, that God should have chosen such a people out of all the nations of the earth, and they to be so rebellious and perverse, if our own experience did not teach us how free his choice is, and how long-suffering he is, and constant in his choice. His people are called to a conformity with himself, "Be ye holy, for I am holy," Lev. chap. xix. and xx; and to a deformity and separation from the rest of the world in their conversation, from whom God had separated them in profession and privileges, Lev. xviii. 24. But behold what unlikeness there is between God and his people. If ye were to paint out to the life a heathen people, you needed no other image or pattern to copy at but this same description of this people. It is this that makes Moses in the preface turn to the heavens and earth, and call them



to hear his song ; and Isaiah begins his preaching thus, "Hear O heavens, and give ear, O earth," &c. A strange thing it must be, that senseless creatures are called to wonder at. It must surpass all the wonders and prodigies of nature and art ; and what is that ? "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me," &c. If we consider what this people seemed once to be, and thought themselves to be, we may easily know how they corrupted themselves. If ye look on them at one time, Exod. xix. 8, and Deut. v. 27, ye would call them children. There was never a fairer undertaking of obedience than this, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do ;" so that the Lord commends them for speaking well, verse 28. "They have well said all that they have spoken," verse 29. "O that there were such an heart in them." But compare all this people's practice with this profession, and you shall find it exceeding contrary ; they indeed corrupted themselves, though they got warning to take heed of it : "take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves, lest ye corrupt yourselves," Deut. iv. 15, 16. But alas, it was within them that destroyed them ; there was not such a heart in them as to hear and obey ; but they undertake, being ignorant of their own deceitful hearts, which were desperately wicked. And therefore, behold what corruption ensued and followed upon such a professed resolution. They never sooner promised obedience, but they disobeyed ; they did abominable works, and did no good, and this is to corrupt their way, Psalm xiv. 1, &c. We need not instance this longer in this people ; we ourselves are a sufficient proof of it. We may make this song our own, "we have corrupted ourselves." Once we had a fair shew of zeal for God, of love and desire of reformation of life, many solemn undertakings were that we should amend our ways and doings : but what is the fruit of all ? Alas, we have corrupted ourselves more than they. Israel promised, but we vowed and swore to the Most High, reformation and amendment of life in our conversations and callings. Lay this rule to

our practices, and are we not a perverse and crooked generation? Oh! that we were more affected with our corruptions, and were more sensible of them; then we could not choose but mourn for our own and the land's departing from God. Did not every man vow and swear to the most high God to endeavour reformation of his life, even a personal reformation? But alas, where is it? "He that is filthy is filthy still." Nay, which is worse, the evil man waxeth worse and worse. There is a great noise of a public reformation of ordinances and worship; but alas, the deformation of life and practice outcries all that noise. Nay, certainly all that is done in the public, must come to an account before God, since our practices outcry it. Public reformation is abomination, where personal corruptions do not cease. This made the Jews' solemn days hateful, "their hands were full of blood." Isa. i. All that ye have spent on the public will never be reckoned, since ye will not consecrate your lives to God, will not give your lusts up to him. Ye are his enemies in the mean time, though you account yourselves religion's friends. I beseech you, consider your ways. Would any of us have thought to have seen such profanity, mocking of godliness, and ignorance in Scotland in so short a time? Nay, it is to be feared that the day is not far off, when ye will corrupt yourselves, and do abominable things; yea, defile yourselves as ill as the nations that know not God.

Every man useth to impute his faults to something beside himself. Ere men take with their own iniquity, they will charge God that gave no more grace: but if men knew themselves, they would deduce their corruption and destruction both from one fountain, that is, from themselves. Ignorance of ourselves maketh us oft undertake fair, and promise so well on our own head. What was the fountain of this people's corruption, and apostatising from their professions? The Lord hints at it, Deut. v. 25, &c. "Oh that they had such a heart." Alas, poor people, ye know not yourselves, that speak so well. I know thee bet-

ter than thou dost thyself; I will declare unto thee thy own thought; thou hast not such a heart as to do what thou sayest; there is a desperate wicked heart within thee, that will destroy thee by lying unto thee. If thou knewest this fountain of original corruption, thou wouldest despair of doing, and say, I cannot serve the Lord. Now here is the fountain of the land's corruption this day: why is our way corrupted? Because our hearts within were not cleansed, and because they were not known. If we had dried up the fountain, the streams had ceased; but we did only dam it up, and cut off some streams for a season. We set up our resolutions and purposes as an hedge to hold it in; but the sea of the hearts iniquity, that is above all things, hath overflowed it, and defiled our way more than in former times. Ye thought upon no other thing, but that presently ye would be all changed people, and would reform without more ado. And thus it is with you in all your public repentances. But alas, you know not yourselves; it is still within you which will yet corrupt you; and it was within us that hath undone us. We were too confident of ourselves, and it is no wonder that the Lord suffers us to prove ourselves, that we may know what is in our heart. Now therefore, since ye have so often tried it, I beseech you follow not such a way again. Ye are called to "deny yourselves, and to follow Christ:" and this is a great part of it, that ye may never expect for any good within yourselves, or the helping of any evil. "In me is thy help found." Look to the fountain of life, Jesus Christ, and despair of your own hearts, for they are desperately wicked, so wicked, that if ye knew them, ye would despair of them, and give them over to another hand, who can create a new heart within you. Ye use to impute your backslidings to the times, to temptations, to company, and such like. This is the way that men shift the challenges of sin: the drunkard puts it on his companion, the servant on his master that led him wrong, the people put rulers in the fault, and absolve themselves, and rulers put one another in the wrong and absolve

themselves. But alas! all of us are ignorant of ourselves: it is not times nor temptations that corrupt us, but ourselves. "No man is tempted," saith James, "of God, but every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed," James i. 14. Temptation were no temptation, if our hearts were not wicked hearts. Nay, many of us are ready to tempt temptations, to provoke the devil to temptations: we cast ourselves open to temptations. Temptations find lusts within, and lust within is the mother to conceive sin, if temptation be the father. Times do not bring evils along with them, they do but discover what was hid before. All the evils and corruptions you now see among us, where were they in the day of our first love, when we were as a loving and beloved child? Have all these risen up of late? No certainly, all that you have seen and found were before, though they did not appear: before they were in the root, now you see the fruit. All the apostacy and profanity that hath been vented in these days, was all shut up within the corners of men's hearts at the beginning; time and temptation hath but uncovered the heart, and made the inside out, hath but opened a sluice to let out this sea of corruption. It is not bred since, but seen since.

Now so it is with us; we have corrupted ourselves, and so we corrupt ourselves still more. Backsliding cometh on as gray hairs, here and there, and is not perceived by beholders. *Nemo repente fit turpissimus*. No man becometh worst at first. There are many steps between that and good. Corruption comes on men's ways as in fruits, some one part beginneth to alter, and then it groweth worse, and putrefieth and corrupteth the rest of the parts. An apple rots not all at once; so it is with us. Men begin at leisure, but they run post before all be done. In some one step of our way we take liberty and think to keep the rest clean; but when that part is corrupted, "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump," and all followeth: and then he that corrupteth himself, is ready to corrupt others. "Children that are corrupters," Isa. i. 4.

Every one by his example corrupts another ; and by corrupting others they again corrupt themselves more. O how infectious an evil is sin ! of a pestilential nature : and truly our hearts are more ready to receive such impressions, than either a world or a devil is to make them.

“ Their spot is not.” Why doth the Lord take pleasure to reckon their sins, to describe so abominable a people ? Is not this “ Jacob in whom he saw no iniquity ? ” Is not this “ Israel, whose transgressions are not known ? ” Certainly if this people would have charged themselves so, he would not have done it. He loves to forget, when we remember our sins : but he must remember them when we forget them. What is the Lord’s great controversy with men ? Here it is, How can ye say or think that ye are not polluted ? Or if ye take with such in general, yet, why is not the conviction of your sin and misery so deeply engraven, as to pursue you out of all hope of remedy in yourselves, Jer. ii. 21, 23. “ And therefore is thine iniquity marked before me,” saith the Lord. God hath determined not to wrong his justice. If men should go away unpunished and unjudged both, where were his righteousness ? If there were no record of men’s transgressions, were he a righteous judge ? Therefore, those who do not judge themselves must leave judgment to him : for once the mouth of “ all flesh must be stopped, and all become guilty before God.” Why pleads the Lord with man ? Because man says, “ I am innocent, I have not sinned, his anger will turn away,” Jer. ii. 35. Will any man speak so in terms ? No indeed, but the Lord constructs so of the most part, because they do more consider the wrongs done to them, than their own wrongs done to God. All men confess the general, that they are sinners ; but who searches and tries his way to find out particulars ? and in as far as ye do not charge yourselves with particular guiltiness, until ye be afraid of his anger ; as long as the consideration of your sins is so superficial and shallow, that ye apprehend no danger of wrath, or immunity from it, certainly God will plead with you.

Justice must so far be glorified, as once to conclude you under the sentence of death; if ye do it not now, then ye leave God to be your judge and party. But if any man shall take with his guiltiness, till his mouth be stopped, and condemn himself in God's sight, I say, mercy and grace in God must not be wronged; "he that judges himself shall not be judged of the Lord." What a fair offer is this to you all! The Lord offers to you, if ye will in time be your own judges, I will resign my judgment to you. If you will in earnest pass the sentence, I will neither pass it nor execute it. If ye come to the Mediator Christ Jesus, to escape from the wrath of a judge, you shall meet with a reconciled Father, and with such love in him as shall hide a multitude of offences. O the depth and height, and breadth of that love! Well then, it shall be a sea to cast your offences into, that shall drown them. Had not his people many spots? Is there any man can say, "I have cleansed my heart from iniquity?" No, not one. Yet behold, he sees no spots in his people. He doth not make them his people because spotless, but he seeth them spotless, because he makes them his people. There is no covering that can hide men's uncleanness from his piercing eye, but one, even Jesus Christ his righteousness: and "Blessed is he whose sins are covered." If this covering were spread over the mouth of all hell, then hell should have a covering from his eyes. If ye therefore strip yourselves naked of your own pretences and leaves, and think not yourselves secure under any created shelter; if ye hide not your iniquity, then it shall be hid indeed; here is a covering that shall hide it from his eyes. There is no spot so heinous, none so ingrained, but the blood of Jesus can wash it as perfectly out, as if it had never been, Isa. xvi. 17. Though your spots were such as are not incident to his children, yet this blood cleanses from one and all; it is of an infinite nature. But though it be so, that "the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin, that there is a fountain opened in the house of David for sin and for uncleanness," for

sin and separation, for such heinous offences as may separate people even from the congregation of the Lord's people; yet there are some sins, some spots that ordinarily his people are not defiled with, and in this respect they may be called "holy and undefiled in the way." There are some marks and characters of unregenerated men, so legible and express, that we may even read from men's conversation, that they are not the children of God. Though the blood of Christ wash from all, yet the child of God ordinarily is kept from some kind of spots; so that if a man shall be spotted with them, it is no marvel he question if he be a child or not. There are two, which I think so gross and unclean spots, that I cannot conceive how a soul washen by Jesus Christ can be defiled with them. One is, a course of profanity. The common walk of the multitude is so gross and profane, so void of God and godliness, that it witnesseth to their face that they are not the sons of God. "He that is born of God sinneth not: he maketh not sin his way and trade to walk into, and please himself into. What are the most part of you. I pray you? Is your spot like the spot of his children? Do not ye declare your sins as Sodom, ye drunkards, who wallow in it daily, and though ye profess repentance, yet never amend? Ye who have a custom of swearing and blaspheming his holy name, do not ye carry in your forehead a spot that is not like his children? The child of God may fall in many particulars, but it is not the spot of a child to continue in them, to add drunkenness to thirst, and yet to dream of escaping wrath. I pray you consider it, for it is of great moment. Do ye carry such a black mark, the devil's mark? O do not think yourselves safe. May not this persuade you? Do but compare yourselves in your converse and walk with an heathen without the church. Set aside your public profession of coming to the church, and hearing the word, and church privileges, and is the difference visible between you and them? Many of you pray no more in secret, or in your families, than they. Ye curse and

swear as they; ye are covetous and worldly as they; and, if ye can, do but draw a line of difference; and if ye cannot, then I ask, what are ye? Is not this the spot of bastards? Another spot is, hatred of godliness and the godly. This is indeed the most lively image of the devil: "who hates his brother is of the devil." He that hates the Son, can he love the Father? he that hates him that is begotten, hates also him that begat him: and he that loves him that begat, loves him that is begotten. Now, how can he be begotten of God, who hates that nature he is said to partake of—who hates him that is begotten? I wonder that many of your consciences are not touched with this? How can ye imagine ye are children of God, when there are none of your neighbours that your heart riseth more against, that ye can less abide, than those who seek God most diligently, whose conversation is different from the world's? Do not flatter yourselves, as if it were hypocrisy ye hated. No, no; ye can agree with profanity, and how can ye hate hypocrisy? Ye can agree with a profane hypocrite—with a profane man, that feigns and dissembles repentance; but if once he were so thoroughly changed, as to hate his former way, and forsake it, then your antipathy beginneth. What a ridiculous thing is it for profanity to take upon it to censure hypocrisy! Certainly if profanity cast out with hypocrisy, it must be because it hath a form of godliness, which it so much detesteth. It is a strange hatred at godliness that a profane man hath, that he cannot abide the very shadow of it. I beseech you who love not holiness in your own persons; who hate to be reformed yourselves, do not add this height of sin to it, as to hate it in others also. If ye be not godly yourselves, do not add this declared manifest character of a child of the devil to it, to hate godliness in others. There were some hope of you, if ye held it in reverence and estimation where ye saw it. There are many other spots not incident to his children, as this, that men will not take with their sin and the curse. It is a



great difficulty to convince the most part of men how miserable they are, how void of God. All the world will not put them out of a good opinion of themselves; and I think this hath been the spot of this people, they would not take with their guiltiness—a stubborn-hearted people, whole-hearted. There needs no more to declare a number of you not to be God's children, but this,—ye have lived all your time in the opinion and belief that ye were God's children, that ye believed in him; ye never saw yourselves lost and miserable. This was the spot of this people, that they esteemed themselves children, though they had many spots that testified to their face that they were no children. They waxed worse and worse; neither mercies nor judgments amended them: "When he slew them," it may be, "they sought him, and flattered him with their mouth, but their hearts were not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant," Psal. lxxviii. 34. Ye would have thought them a godly people, while under the rod for a season; but all that was but extorted and pressed out by violence of affliction, as the groans of a beast under a burden. But a little time declared that it was but flattery, though they thought themselves ingenuous; and therefore they returned to their old provocations, as a sow to the puddle, or a dog to his vomit. And is not this our spot, even the spot of great and small. If any would look upon us in our engagements and vows under trouble, we appear like his people, a praying, repenting, and believing people; but how quickly doth all this prove flattery? Do we not still return to our old ways that we have been exemplarily punished for, and which we so solemnly engaged against. The heat of the furnace dieth out, and they wax colder and harder; a little time wears away all their tenderness. Every man to his own things, "and no man seeks the things of Jesus Christ." This was this people's sin and spot. "Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked, and lightly esteemed the rock of their salvation." When their heads were lifted up to government; when they were raised out

of the waters of affliction and poverty, then they forgot God, they oppressed the poor and needy, eat up his people as bread, and could not abide to have their faults told them ; they “ said to the seers, see not, and to the prophets, prophesy not unto us right things,” &c. Isa. xxx. 10. I think likewise, that oppression is not the spot of his children, whoever use it. And covetousness presses men to it, when power is in their hand to compass it. This is a vile spot, unworthy of any ruler, let be a Christian. It was abhorred among Pagans. O but “ it cries to heaven,” saith the Scripture ; it hath a double cry when other sins cry once ! The heinousness of it crieth once, and the poor people cry again, and both these come up to the ears of the Lord of hosts ; nay, it hath the cry of murder, and another beside. He that is greedy of gain, is said “ to take away the life of the owners thereof,” Prov. i 19. So he is a murderer before God ; and the poor man’s blood crieth for vengeance, and then himself seconds it, either by prayer, or crying out for misery, Job xxxv. 9. All men’s prayers and professions will not outcry these two. The people’s many prayers could not be heard, Isa. i. 15, “ because their hands were full of blood,” which had a louder cry than their prayers. The poor also oppressing the poor, is like a sweeping rain that leaves nothing behind it.

It is read in the margin, that they are not his children, —that is their blot. And indeed it is so. It is a great blot and stain in the face of any man whoever he be, that he is not born of God—that he can reckon kindred to none but Adam. But what indignity is it and disgrace, for a people professing his name, yet to have no other generation, to reckon no higher than the earth and the earthly. What is now the great blot of our visible church ? Here it is, the most part are not God’s children, but called so ; and it is the greater blot that they are called so, and are not. O poor saints, esteem your honour and high privilege ; ye have received this, to be the sons of God ! It is no blot to you that you are poor and despised in the world ; but it is, and shall be an eternal blot to the great

and rich, and wise in the world, that they are not the children of God. Christianity is no blot, though it be in reproach among men, but it is really the glory and excellency of a man; but the wart of it, alas! how doth it abase many high and noble, impoverish many rich, and infatuate many wise! Ye think all of you are the children of God, because ye are in the church, and partake of the ordinances and sacraments; and so did this people. But Moses did not flatter these Jews, but told both princes and people in their face that they were not children of God, because only Israel in the letter, they had not children's manners. O that it might not be said of the most part of you, "that ye are not children of God," and that that is your blot and shame. It is the shame of rulers not to be the children of God. They are wise, they are active, they are noble, but one spot disgraceth all, one fly maketh their ointment to stink, they are not gracious, many of them but sons of men at the farthest reckoning, are not begotten again to a lively hope. "Not many wise, not many noble, not many rich." The scantiness of gracious men is the spot of judicatories, that there are many children of the world, but few children of light in them. O how beautiful and glorious would judicatories be, if all members were children of light! What glory would there be, if all of them did shine and enlightened one another! But what beauty or comeliness, what majesty can be in rulers or judicatures, when the image of God is not in them! This is also the spot of assemblies, synods, presbyteries, that there are few godly ministers. Alas, that this complaint should be, even among those whose office it is to beget many children to God! how few of them are begotten, or have the image of their Father! And thus church assemblies have no beauty, such as the courts of Jesus Christ should have. O that we were in love with Christianity and grace; that it were our grand question, how shall I be put among the children? The Lord seems to wonder at it, and make a question of it, "How can such as we be put among the children?" Jer. iii. 19.

But he answers it himself, "Thou shalt call me, My Father, and shall not turn away from me." There is no more, but take with your wanderings and wrongs done to God, embrace him in Jesus Christ, and he becomes your Father; and if ye be children, sure ye will resolve to abide in your Father's house, and turn no more to a present world. or your former lusts.

"They are a perverse and crooked generation." What pleasure hath the Lord in speaking thus, when he upbraids none? Certainly, in a manner it is drawn out of him. Would he object our faults, if we did not defend them by obstinacy? Perverseness and crookedness is obstinacy and incorrigibleness against mercies and judgments,—“that which is crooked cannot be made straight,” saith Solomon. Then doth the Lord take notice of sins, when men refuse to return, and so maintain their sins. It is this which heightens provocations, and makes out the controversy,—perverseness in sin. It is not ordinary common infirmities that the Lord punisheth, either in a land or person; but when infirmities are discovered by the light of the word, when the Lord useth means to reclaim men in his providence, and yet no means prevail, then they are reckoned perverse. Now, perverseness is not the spot of his children: the child of God daily bows and folds to him, receives challenges from him, takes with iniquity and yields unto God. O that this title might not be written above the head of this generation deservedly—“This is a perverse and crooked generation.”

## V.

Psal. lxxiii. 28—But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all thy works.

AFTER man's first transgression, he was shut out from the tree of life, and cast out of the garden, by which was signified his seclusion and sequestration from the presence of God, and communion with him: and this was in a

manner the extermination of all mankind in one, when Adam was driven out of paradise. Now, this had been an eternal separation for anything we could do, for we can do nothing but depart by a perpetual backsliding, and make the distance every day wider, except it had pleased the Lord of his infinite grace, to condescend to draw near to us in gracious promises and offers of a Redeemer. If he had not made the first journey from heaven to earth, by sending his only Son, we should have given over the hope of returning from earth to heaven. But he hath taken away the greatest part of that distance, in drawing near to our nature; yea, in assuming our flesh into the fellowship of his glorious divinity. He hath stooped so low to meet with us, and offered himself the trysting place between God and us, a fit meeting place, where there is a conjunction of the interests of both parties, and now, there is no more to do, but to draw near to God in Jesus Christ, since he hath made the great journey to come down to us. We have not that infinite gulf of satisfaction to justice to pass over; we have not the height of divine Majesty, as he is infinitely above us, and offended with us, to climb up unto. Certainly we could not but fall into the lake that is below us, if we were to aim so high. But the Lord hath been pleased to descend to us, in our mean capacity in the flesh, and fill up the immeasurable gulph of justice, by the infinite merits and sufferings of his Son in our flesh. And now he invites us, he requests us, to come to him in his Son and have life. We are not come to mount Sinai, that might not be touched, that burnt with fire and tempest, where there were terrible sights, and intolerable noises. I say, such a God we might have had to do with, a consuming fire, instead of an instructing light,—a devouring fire, instead of a healing Sun of righteousness,—considering that there is nothing in us which is not fit and prepared fuel for everlasting burnings. But we are come,—and that is the eternal wonder of angels,—unto mount Sion, to be citizens in the city of God, and fellow-citizens with blessed angels and glorified spirits, to

peace and reconciliation with him who was our judge. And if you ask how this may be? I answer, because we have one Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, to come to, whose blood crieth louder for pardon of sinners, than all men's transgressions can cry for punishment of sinners. Heb. xii. 18—20, &c.

Let us consider the first step and degree of union with God,—it consists in faith in Jesus Christ. This is the first motion of the soul in drawing near to God; for, “as there is no remission without blood,” so no access to God without a mediator. For if you consider what is in Jesus Christ, you will find that which will engage the desire of the heart; as also that which will give boldness and confidence to act that desire. Eternal life is promised and proposed in him,—he offers rest to weary souls, and hath it to give. That which we ignorantly and vainly seek elsewhere, here it is to be found. For personal excellencies, he is the chief infinitely beyond comparison; and for suitability to us and our necessities, all the gospel is an expression of it; so that he is presented in the most attractive drawing manner that can be imagined. And then, when the desires are inflamed, yet if there be no oil of hope to feed it it will soon cool again. Therefore take a view again, and you may have boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus. There was some kind of distance kept in the Old Testament, none but the high priest might enter into the holiest place: but the entry of our High Priest into it, that is, into heaven, hath made it patent to all that come to him and apply his blood. There is a new and living way by the holy flesh of Christ, consecrated and made, of infinite value and use, by the divinity of his person; and therefore, having such a one of our kindred so great with God, “we may draw near with a true heart and full assurance of faith, having our consciences sprinkled,” &c. Heb. x. 18—20, &c. Now, since the way is made plain to you, and the entry is opened up in the gospel; do you not find your hearts stir within you to draw near to him? Do you not find a necessity of mak-

ing peace by such a Mediator? O that ye knew the great distance between God and your natures, and what the hazard is, "lo! they that are far from thee shall perish:" then certainly, you would take help of this invitation, and be easily drawn unto Jesus Christ. But, unto you who have adventured to draw near for pardon of sin in Christ, I would recommend unto you, that you would draw yet nearer to God. After that the partition-wall of wrath and condemnation is removed, yet there is much darkness in your minds, and corruption in our natures that separates from him; I mean, intercepts and disturbs that blessed communion you are called unto. Therefore I would exhort you, as James, "draw near to God, and he will draw near to you," chap. iv. 8; and that, wherein this most consists, is in studying that purification of our natures, that cleansing of our hearts from guile, and our hands from offences, by which our souls may draw towards a resemblance of God. This access and drawing near to God in assimilation, and conformity of nature, is the great design of the gospel. "Be ye holy, for I am holy." Now, ye are agreed, "walk with him," Amos. iii. 3, as Enoch "walked with God," Gen. v. 24. That is, labour in all your conversation, to set him before your eyes, and to study to be well pleased with him in all things, and to please him in all, to conform yourselves to his pleasure in every thing. And this communion in walking, especially consists in that communication of the spirit with God in prayer: this is the nearest and sweetest approach, when the soul is lifted up to God, and is almost out of itself in him; and this being the ordinary exercise and motion of the soul, it exceedingly advances in the first point of nearness, that is, in conformity with God. Drawing often near in communion with him in prayer, makes the soul draw towards his likeness, even as much converse of men together, will make them like one another.

Now, for the commendation of this, "It is good." What greater evil can be imagined than separation from the greatest good? And what greater good, than accession

to the greatest good? Every thing is in so far happy and well, as it is joined with, and enjoyeth that which is convenient for it. Light is the perfection of the earth; remove it, and what a disconsolate and unpleasant thing is it? Now, truly there is nothing suitable to the immortal spirit of man, but God; and therefore all its happiness or misery must be measured by the access or recess, nearness or distance, of that infinite goodness. Therefore, is it any wonder, "that all they that go a-whoring from him perish," as every man's heart doth? For we are infinitely bound by creation, by many other bonds stronger than wedlock, to consecrate and devote ourselves wholly to God; but this is treacherously broken. Every man turns aside to vanity and lies, and is guilty of heart-whoredom from God, and spiritual idolatry, because the affection that should be preserved chaste for him, is prostitute to every base object. So then, this divorcement of the soul from God, cannot but follow thereupon, even an eternal eclipse of true and real life and comfort. And whoever draws back from the fountain of life and salvation, cannot but find elsewhere perdition and destruction, Heb. x. ult. My beloved, let us set this aside all other things which are the pursuits and endeavours of the most part of men. Men's natural desires are carried towards health, food, raiment, life and liberty, peace. and such like; but the more rational sort of men, seek after some shadow of wisdom and virtue. Yet the generality of men, both high and low, have extravagant illimited desires towards riches, pleasure, preferment; and all that we have spoken, is inclosed within the narrow compass of men's abode here, which is but for a moment. So that, if it were possible, that all these fore-mentioned desires and delights of men, could attend any man for the space of an hundred years; though he had the concurrence of the streams of the creatures to bring him in satisfaction, though all the world should bow to him and be subject to the beck of his authority, without stroke of sword, though all the creatures should spend their strength and wit upon his satisfaction;



yet do but consider what that shall be within some few years, when he shall be spoiled of all that attendance, denuded of all external comforts, when the fatal period must close his life, peace, health, and all ; and his poor soul also, that was drowned in that gulf of pleasure, shall then find itself robbed of its precious treasure, that is, God's favour, and so remain in everlasting banishment from his presence. Do ye think, I say, that man were happy? Nay! O happy Lazarus, who is now blessed in Abraham's bosom, who enjoys an eternity of happiness, for a moment's misery! But, my beloved, you know that it is not possible, even to attain to that imagined happiness here. All the gain that is found, is not able to quit the cost and expense of grief, vexation, care, toiling and sweating that is about them.

But if ye would be persuaded, there is that to be found easily, which you trouble yourselves seeking elsewhere ; and, believe me, though the general apprehension of men be, that peace, plenty, preferment, and satisfaction in this life, to compensate their pains, are more easily attainable than fellowship and communion with God ; yet I am persuaded, that there is nothing more practicable than the life of religion. God hath condemned the world under vanity and a curse, and that which is crooked can by no art or strength be made straight ; but he hath made this attainable by his gracious promises, even a blessed life, in approaching near to himself, the fountain of all life. And this is a certain good, an universal good, and an eternal good. It will not disappoint you as other things do, of which you have no assurance for all your toilings. This is made more infallible to a soul that truly seeks it in God. It is as certain, that they cannot be ashamed through frustration, as that he is faithful. And then it is an universal good, one comprehensive of all, one eminently and virtually all things created, to be joined to the infinite allfulness of God. This advanceth the soul to a participation of all that is in him. This is health, Psal. xlii. 11. Prov. iii. 8. This is light, John viii. 12. It is life, John

xi. 25. Liberty, John viii. 36. Food and raiment, Isaiah lxi. 10, and John iv. 14. And what not? It is profit, pleasure, preferment, in the superlative degree, and not scattered in so many various streams, which divide and distract the heart, but all combined in one. It is the true good of both soul and body, and so the only good of man. And lastly, it is eternal, to be coetaneous with thy soul. Of all other things it may be said, "I have seen an end of them," they were and are not; but this will survive time, and all the changes of it, and then it will begin to be perfect, when all perfection is at an end. Now from all this, I would exhort you in Jesus Christ, to ponder those things in your hearts, and consider them in reference to your own souls, that ye may say with David, "It is good for me to draw near to God."

That which all men seek after, is happiness and well-being. Men pursue nothing but under the notion of good; and to complete that which may be called good, there is required some excellency in the thing itself, and then a conveniency and suitableness to us, and these jointly draw the heart of man. But the great misery is, that there is so much ignorance and misapprehension of that which is truly good, and then, when any thing of it is known, there is so little serious consideration and application of it to ourselves; and this makes the most part of men wander up and down in the pursuit of divers things which are not that true good of the soul, and set their hearts on that which is not, until they find their hearts fall down, as wanting a foundation, and then they turn about again to some other vanity. And so the wanderings and strayings of men are infinite, because the by-ways are innumerable, though the true way be but one. Yea, the turnings and toilings of one man are various and manifold, because he quickly loses the scent of happiness in every way he falls into, and therefore must turn to another. And thus men are never at any solid setting about this great business, never resolute wherein this happiness consists, nor peremptory to follow it; but they fluctuate upon uncer-

tain apprehensions, and diverse affections, until the time and date of salvation expire ; and then they must know certainly and surely, the inevitable danger and irrecoverable loss they have brought themselves to, who would not take notice of the sure way, both of escaping wrath, and attaining happiness, while it was to be found.

Well, then, this is the great business we have here to do ; yea, to make the circle the larger, it is that great business we have to do in this world, to know wherein the true well being and eternal welfare of our souls consist, and by any means to apply unto that, as the only thing necessary, in regard of which, all other things are ceremonies, circumstances, and indifferent things. And to guide us in this examination and application here is one man, who, having almost made shipwreck upon the rocks which men commonly dash upon, and being by the Lord led safely by, and almost arrived at the coast of true felicity : he sets out a beacon, and lights a candle to all who shall follow him, to direct them which way they shall steer their course. Examples teach more effectually than rules. It is easy for every man to speak well upon this point in general, and readily all will acknowledge, that here it is, and nowhere else. But yet all this is outcryng by the contrary noise of every man's practice. These general grants of truth are recalled in the conversations of men, therefore they cannot have much influence upon any man. But when we hear one speak, and see him walk so too ; when we have the example of a most wise man, who wanted not these worldly expectations, which other men have, so that he not only propones it to us, but after much serious advisement, after mature consideration of all that can be said of the wicked's best estate, and the godly's worst, setting down resolute conclusions for himself—"it is good for me to draw near to God ;" yea, so determinate in it, that if none of the world should be of that mind, he would not change it,—though all should walk in other ways, he would choose to be rather alone in this, than in the greatest crowd of company in any

other :—Now, I say, when we have such a copy cast us, a man of excellent parts in sobriety and sadness, choosing that way, which all in words confess to be the best; should not this awake us out of our dreams, and raise us up to some more attention and consideration of what we are doing? The words, you see, are the holy resolution of a holy heart, concerning that which is the chiefest good. You see the way to happiness, and you find the particular application of that to David's soul, or of his soul to it. We shall speak a word of the thing itself, then of the commendation of it, then of the application of it.

For the thing itself,—“drawing near to God,”—it gives us some ground to take a view of the posture in which men are found by nature, “far off from God.” Our condition by nature, I cannot so fitly express, as in the apostle's words, Eph. ii. 12,—“Without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.” A deplorable estate indeed, hopeless and helpless: no hope in it; that is the extremity of misery, the refuse of all condition. “Without Christ, and without God.” O! these are words of infinite weight: without those, without whom it is simply impossible to be happy; and without whom it is not possible but to be miserable;—without the fountain of light, life, and consolation, without which there is nothing but pure darkness, without any beam of light; nothing but death, without the least breathing of life; nothing but vexation, without the least drop of consolation. In a word, without these, and wanting these, whom, if you want, it were good to be spoiled of all being; to be nothing, if that could be, or never to have been any thing. Men will seek death, and cannot find it. O what a loss and deprivation is the loss of God, which makes death more desirable than life; and not to be at all, infinitely preferable to any being! Now, it is true, that the bringing in of multitudes within the pale of the visible church, is some degree of access and nearness to God; for then they become citizens

as to external right, in the commonwealth of the church, and have the offers of the promises made to them; in respect of which visible standing, the apostle speaks of the whole church of Ephesus, “but now ye are made near who were far off,” verse 13, notwithstanding, that many of them were found afterwards to have left their first love, Rev. ii. But yet, beloved, to speak more inwardly, and as your souls stand in the sight of God, the generality of those who are near hand in outward ordinances, are yet far off from God in reality, “without God and without Christ,” as really touching any soul-feeling, as those who are altogether without. The bond of peace and union was broken in paradise; sin dissolved it, and broke off that nearness and friendship with God; and from that day to this day, there hath been an infinite distance and separation betwixt God and man. The steps and degrees of it are many. There is darkness and blindness in men’s minds. Such ignorance naturally possesseth the multitude, that it wholly alienates them from the life of God, Eph. iv. 18. For what fellowship can light, that pure light, have with such gross darkness as is among us? This certainly is the removal of that Sun of Righteousness from our souls, or the imposition of the clouds of transgression, that makes it so dark a night in the souls of men. And then there is nothing but enmity and desperate wickedness in the heart of man, and this keeps the stronghold of the affections, Rom. viii. Jer. xvii. There cannot be a further elongation or separation of the soul from God, than to turn so opposite in all inclinations and dispositions of his holy will: for the distance between God and us is not local in the point of place, for whither shall we go from him who is every where? And thus he is near hand every one of us; but it is also real in the deformity and repugnancy of our natures to his holy will. But add unto this, that being thus separated in affection, and disjoined, as it were, in natural dispositions, we cannot draw near to God in any ordinance, as the word, prayer, &c. Though we may, as that people, draw near with our lips, and ask of him our

duty, and seem to delight to know him; yet there is this natural incapacity and crookedness in the heart of man, that it cannot truly approach unto the Father of spirits, with any soul-desire and delight. But “their hearts are removed far from me,” Isa. vi. 9. Matt. iv. 12. I think men might observe, that their souls act not in religious business as they should, but that they remove their souls many miles distant from their bodies, and they cannot keep any constancy in this approach of prayer to God, cannot walk with him in their conversation, or carry him along in their meditation. But there is one point of estrangement and separation superadded to all, that there is no man can come near to God, without an oblation and offering of peace; that there is no approaching to him, but as to a consuming fire, except we can bring a sacrifice to appease, and a present to please him for our infinite offences. There the difference stands; we cannot draw near to walk together, till we be agreed. And truly, this unto man is impossible, for we have nothing so precious as the redemption of our souls, nothing can compensate infinite wrongs, or satisfy infinite justice. Now, this seems to make our nearness again desperate, and to put men furthest off from hope.

Notwithstanding, this is the very purpose of the gospel, preached from the beginning of the world, to remove that distance, and to take impediments of meeting out of the way; for that great obstruction, the want of a sacrifice and ransom, the Lord hath supplied it, he himself hath furnished it; and it was the great design carried on from the beginning of the world. But as the sun, the nearer he is, the more the earth is enlightened; so here, first some dawning of light appears, as a messenger of hope, to tell that the Redeemer shall come—that the true sacrifice shall be slain; then still the nearer his own appearing, the clearer are the manifestations of him, and the great design is more opened up, till at length he breaks out in glory from under a cloud, and shews himself to the world, to be “that Lamb of God that should take away

the sins of the world." And now, as the apostle to the Hebrews speaks, chap. vii. 19, "The law hath made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did, by the which we draw nigh to God." All the sacrifices and shadows that were under the law, did but point at this perfect ransom; and the way of access to God through a Mediator was not so clear; but now the matter is made as hopeful as is possible,—the partition-wall of the law's curses—the hand-writing against us is removed on the cross—the enmity slain—the distance removed by the blood of the cross, being partly filled up by his descent into our nature, partly by his lower descent in our nature to suffer death. And this is the savoury oblation that we have to present to God, and may have boldness to come nigh because of it. And when once our access is made by the blood of Jesus Christ, then we are called and allowed to come still nigher, to cleave and adhere to him as our Father, to pray unto him, to walk with him. Then we should converse as friends and familiars together; then draw nigh to his light for illumination, and to him as the fountain of life, for quickening, to place our delight and desire in him, to forsake all other things, even our wills and pleasures, and to lose them that they may be found in his; to converse much in his company, and be often in communication with him, and meditation upon him. This is the very design and substance of the gospel. It holds forth the way of making up the breach between man and God, of bringing you nigh who are yet afar off, and nearer who are near hand. O let us hearken to it!

## VI.

Prov. xxvii. 1.—Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.

THERE are some peculiar gifts that God hath given to man in his first creation, and endued his nature with, be-

yond other living creatures, which being rightly ordered and improved towards the right objects, do advance the soul of man to a wonderful height of happiness, that no other sublunary creature is capable of. But by reason of man's fall into sin. these are quite disordered and turned out of the right channel ; and therefore, as the right improvement of them would make man happy, so the wrong employment of them loadens him with more real misery, than any other creature. I mean, God hath given to man two notable capacities, beyond other things ; one is, to know and reflect upon himself, and to consider what conveniency is in any thing towards himself—what goodness or advantage redounds to himself from them, and in that reflection and comparison to enjoy what he hath ; another is to look forward beyond the present time, and, as it were, to anticipate and prevent the slow motions of time, by a kind of foresight and providence. In a word, he is a creature framed unto more understanding than others, and so capable of more joy in present things, and more foresight of the time to come. He is made mortal, yet with an immortal spirit of an immortal capacity, that hath its eye upon the morrow—upon eternity. Now, herein consists either man's happiness or misery, how he reflects upon himself. and what he chooseth for the matter of his joy and gloriation, and what providence he hath for the time to come. If those be rightly ordered, all is well ; but if not, then woe unto him, there is more hope of a beast than of him.

Man's nature inclines to boasting—to glorying in something, and this ariseth from some apprehended excellency or advantage, and so is originated in the understanding power of man. which is far above beasts. Beasts find the things themselves, but they do not, they cannot reflect upon their own enjoyment of them, and therefore they are not capable of such pleasure ; for the more distinct knowledge of things in relation to ourselves, the more delight ensueth upon it. Many creatures have singular qualities and virtues, but they are nothing the happier ;



for they know them not, and have no use of them, but are wholly destined to the use of man, who therefore is only said to enjoy them, because he only is capable of joy from them. And this, I suppose, may give us a hint at the absolute incomprehensible blessedness, self-complacency, and delight of God. It cannot but be immeasurably great, seeing the knowledge of himself and all creatures is infinite; he comprehends all his own power, and virtue, and goodness, and therefore his delight and rejoicing is answerable. There is a glorying and boasting then that is good, which man is naturally framed unto; and this is that which David expresses, Psal. xxxiv. 2, "My soul shall make her boast in God;" and Psal. xlviii. 8, "In God we boast all the day long, and praise thy name for ever." When the soul apprehends that all-sufficiency, and self-sufficient fulness of God; what infinite treasures of goodness, and wisdom, and power are in him, and so how suitable and convenient he is to the condition of the soul; what a sweet correspondence there is between his fulness and our emptiness—his mercy and our misery—his infiniteness and our unsuitableness; that there is in him to fill and overflow the soul: the apprehension of this cannot but in a manner perfume the soul with the delight. You find how the senses are refreshed, when they meet with their suitable object; how a pleasant smell refresheth the scent; how lively and beautiful colours are delightful to the eye. But much more here, God is the proportioned object of the immortal spirit; he corresponds to all its capacities, and fills it with unconceivable sweetness. But, my beloved, boasting and glorying in him, ariseth not only from the proportionableness and convenience of him to our spirits; but this must be superadded,—propriety in him. Things are loved, because excellent in themselves, or because they are our own; but we boast in nothing, we glory in nothing, but because it is both excellent in itself, and ours besides. It is the apprehended interest in any thing makes the soul rise and lift up itself after this manner—to have such a one to be ours,—

such a Lord to be our God,—one so high and sublime,—one so universally full, to be made over to thee; here is the immediate rise of the soul's gloriation. And truly, as there is nothing can be so suitable a portion, so there is nothing that can be so truly made ours as God. Of all things a believer hath, there is nothing so much his own as God,—nothing so indissolubly tied unto him,—nothing so inseparably joined. See Paul's triumph upon the account, Rom. viii. Nothing can truly be said to be the soul's own, but that which is not only coetaneous with it, that survives mortality, and the changes of the body, but likewise is inseparable from it. What a poor empty sound is all that can be spoken of him, till your souls be once possessed of him; it cannot make your hearts leap within you, but it cannot but excite and stir up a believer's heart.

Now there may be a lawful kind of gloriation, rejoicing in the works of God, consequent to the first, which is a little stream from that greater river which runs out from it, and flows into it again. A soul that truly apprehends God, will take delight to view the works of God, which make such an expression of him, and are a part of the magnificence of our heavenly Father. But this is all in reference to him and not to ourselves; for then it degenerates and loseth its sweetness, when once it turns the channel towards the adorning of the creature. True boasting in God hath necessarily conjoined with it an humble and low esteem of a man's self, Psal. xxxiv. 2, "The humble shall hear thereof, and be glad." As humility and self-emptiness made David go out of himself, to seek satisfaction in God, and having found it, he boasts and triumphs, so there were none capable of understanding his triumph, or partaking with him in his delights, but the humble souls. Now you may perceive how far this boasting here spoken of is degenerated from that, and so how far man's nature is spoiled,—"Beast not thyself," &c. The sufficient foundation, even such as will bear the weight of triumph; but that which men's spirits are now naturally

set upon, cannot carry, cannot found such gloriation, and therefore this boasting makes men ridiculous. If you saw a man glorying in rags, setting forth himself to be admired in them, or boasting in some vain despicable and base thing, you would pity him, or laugh at him as one dis-tempered. The truth is, the natural man is mad, hath lost his judgment, and is under the greatest distraction imaginable since the fall. That fall hath troubled his brains, and they are never settled, till the new creation come to put all right again, and compose the heart of man. I say, all other distractions are but particular, in respect to particular things: but there is a general distraction over all mankind, in reference to things of most general and most eternal concernment. Now, fools and mad persons, they retain the same affections and passions that are in men, as anger, love, hatred, grief, joy, &c, but it is so much the worse, since the judgment, which is the only directive and guide of them, is troubled. Now they are set on wrong objects, they run at random, and are under no kind of rule, and so they hurry the poor man and put him in a pitiful case. Now indeed so it is with us,—since sin entered, the soul is wholly turned off God, the only true object of delight, in which only there can be solid gloriation. The mind of man is blinded, and his passions are strong, and so they are now spent upon empty vanities, and carried head-long without judgment. Oftentimes he glories in that which is his shame, and boasts in that which is his sin, and which will cause nothing but shame, the more weight be laid upon it. There is in man an oblivion and forgetfulness of God, and in this darkness of the ignorance of God, everything is apprehended or misapprehended, as present sense suggests, and as it fancies a conveniency or excellency. Thither the soul is carried, as if it were something, and then it is but the east-wind. There is nothing beside God that is a fit matter of boasting, because it lacks one of the essential ingredients—either it is not suitable to the soul, or it is not truly our own. There wants either proportion to the vast

capacity and void of our desires, and so cannot fill up that really, but only in a deluding dream or imagination, and therefore will certainly make the issue rather vexation than gloriation, or there wants property and interest in them; so they are changeable and perishing in their own nature, and by divine appointment, that they cannot be conceived to be the proper good of the immortal soul. They cannot be truly our own, because they will shortly cease to be, and before they cease to be, they may in a moment cease to be ours. That tie of interest is a draw knot, whatsoever catcheth hold of the end of it looseth it.

The object of degenerate and vicious boasting is here held out: "Boast not thyself," or "of thyself." Whatsoever be the immediate matter of it, this is always the ultimate and principal object. Since man fell from God, self is the centre of all his affections and motions. This is the great idol, the Diana, that the heart worships, and all the contention, labour clamour, and care that is among men, is about her silver shrines, so to speak, something relating to the adorning or setting forth this idol. It is true, since the heart is turned from that direct subordination to God, the affections are scattered and parted into infinite channels, and run towards innumerable objects; for the want of that original unity, which comprehends in its bosom universal plenty, must needs breed infinite variety, to supply the insatiable appetite of the soul. And this might be enough to convince you, that your souls are quite out of course, and altogether wandered from the way of happiness, because they are poured out on such a multiplicity of insufficient, unsatisfying things, every one of which is narrow, limited and empty, and the combination and concurrence of all being a thing either impossible or improbable to be attained. But we may conceive that men's affections part themselves into three great heads of created things: one of which runs towards the goods or perfections of the mind; another towards the goods or advantages of the body; and a third towards those things that are without us, *bona fortunæ*, riches and honour, &c.

Now each of these sends out many streams and rivulets as so many branches from it; but all of them, though they seem to have a direct course towards other things, yet wind about and make a circular progress to the great ocean of self-estimation, whence they issued at first.

You may find all of these, Jer. ix. 23, falling under a divine interdiction and curse, as being opposite to glorying in God. While men reflect within themselves, and behold some endowments and abilities in their minds beyond other men, of which wisdom is the principal, and here stands for all inward advantages or qualifications of the soul: in that secret reflection and comparison, there is a tacit gloriation, which yet is a loud blasphemy in God's ear. It is impossible almost for a man to recognise and review his own parts, such as ingeny, memory, understanding, sharpness of wit, readiness of expression, goodness and gentleness of nature, but that in such a review, the soul must be puffed up, apprehending some excellency beyond other men, and taking complacency in it, which are the two acts of robbery that are in gloriation and boasting. Commonly this arises from unequal comparisons. We please ourselves that we are *deterioribus meliores*, better than the worst, and build self-estimation upon the ruins of other men's disadvantages, as if it were any point of praise in us that they are worse; like men that stand upon a height, and measure their own altitude, not from their just intrinsic quantity, but taking the advantage of the bottom, whereby we deceive our ownelves. I remember a word of Solomon's, that imports how dangerous a thing it is for a man to reflect upon, or search into his own glory, Prov. xxv. 37. "It is not good to eat much honey: so for men to search their own glory is not glory."

To surfeit in the excess of honey or sweet things, drives to vomit, and cloyes the stomach, ver. 16. Though it be sweet, there is great need, yea, the more need of caution and moderation about it; so for a man either to search into his own breast, and reflect upon his own excellen-

ries, to find matter of gloriation, or studiously to affect it among others, and enquire into other men's account and esteem of him, it is no glory, it is a dangerous and shameful folly. Now this is not only incident to natural spirits, upon their consideration of their own advantages, but even to the most gracious, upon the review of spiritual endowments and prerogatives. It is such a subtle and insinuating poison that it spreads universally, and infects the most precious ointments of the soul, and, as it were, poisons the very antidote and counterpoison. So forcible is this that was first dropped into man's nature by Satan's envy, that it diffuses itself even into humility, and humiliation itself, and makes a man proud because of humility. The apostle found need to caveat this, Rom. xi. 18—20, "Boast not, be not high minded, but fear,—thou standest by faith." And chap. xii. 16, "Mind not high things; be not wise in your own conceits." And 1 Cor. viii 2, "If any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing as he ought to know." All which gives us a plain demonstration of this, that self-gloriation and complacency, in reflection upon ourselves, is both the greatest ignorance. and the worst sacrilege. It is an argument of greater ignorance for a man to think he knows, than not to know indeed. It is the worst and most dangerous ignorance, to have such an opinion of our knowledge, gifts, and graces; for that puffs up, swells with empty wind, and makes a vain tumour: and then it is great sacrilege, a robbing of the honour that is due to God. "For what hast thou that thou hast not received?" That appropriating of these things to ourselves as ours, is an impropriating of them from their right owner, that is, God, 1 Cor. iv. 7. For if thou didst apprehend that thou receivest it, where then is glorying? I would desire then, that whenever you happen to reflect upon yourselves, and observe any advantage either natural or spiritual in yourselves, that you may think this word sounds from heaven, "Let him that glorieth glory in the Lord. Let not the wise man g'ory in his wisdom;" and so not the learned man in

his learning, nor the eloquent man in his speaking, nor the ingenious man in his quickness, nor the good man in his goodness. All these things, though sweet, yet will surfeit; gloriation in them is neither glory nor gain, neither honourable nor profitable.

Then, the stream of gloriation flows in the channel of bodily gifts, as might, strength of body, beauty and comeliness of parts, and other such endowments; which, besides that it is as irrational as the former, is a sacrilegious impropriation of the most free and arbitrary gifts of God to ourselves; it is withal absurd, in that it is not so truly of ourselves. These bodily ornaments and endowments do not perfect or better a man as a man; they are but the alterable qualities of the vessel or tabernacle of a man; in which other baser creatures may far excel him. How many comely and beautiful souls are lodged within obscure and ugly cottages or bodies of clay, which will be taken down! And the great advantage is, that the soul of a man, which is a man cannot be defiled from without, that is, from the body, though never so loathsome or deformed; the vilest body cannot mar the soul's beauty. But then, on the other hand, the most beautiful body is defiled and deformed by the filthiness of sin in the soul; and O how many deformed and ugly souls dwell in beautiful and comely bodies, which truly is no other thing than a devil in an image well carved and painted. Christians, you had need to correct this within you, even a self-complacency, joined with despising of others in the consideration of those external gifts God hath given you. What an abominable thing is it to cast up in reproach, or in your hearts to despise any other for natural imperfections, such as blindness, lameness, deformity or such like? Let that word sound always in your ears, "Who made thee to differ from another? Boast not thyself," &c. But there is as strong a stream runs in the third channel as in any; gloriation arising from those outward and extrinsic differences that the providence of God makes among men, such as riches, honour, gain, &c. You find such men, Psalm

xlix. 6. Prov xviii. 11, and x. 15. That which a godly man makes the name of the Lord—that is, the ground and foundation of his confidence for present and future times—that the most part of men make their riches, that is, their strong city, and their high wall; their hope and expectation is reposed within it. This is the tower, or wall of defence against the injuries and calamities of the times, which most part of men are building; and if it go up quickly, if they can get these several stones or pieces of gain, scraped together into a heap, they straightway imagine themselves safe, as under a high wall. But there is no truth in it, it is all but in their imagination; and therefore it comes often down about their ears, and offends them, instead of being a defence. Let a man creep, as it were, from off the ground where the poor lie, and get some advantage of ground above them, or be exalted to some dignity or office, and so set by the shoulders higher than the rest of the people, or yet grow in some more abundance of the things of this life; and strange it is, what a vanity or tumour of mind instantly follows! He presently thinks himself somebody, and forgetting either who is above him, to whom all are worms creeping and crawling on the footstool; or what a sandy foundation he stands upon himself, he begins to take some secret complacency in himself, and to look down upon others below him. He applauds, as it were, unto himself, and takes it in evil part to want the approbation and *plaudite* of others. Then he cannot so well endure affronts and injuries as before; he is not so meek and condescending to his equals or inferiors. While he was poor he used entreaties, but “now he answers roughly,” Prov. xviii. 23, as Solomon gives the character of him. How many vain and empty gloriations are there about the point of birth and place, and what foolish contentions about these, as if it were children struggling among themselves about their order and rank. There is no worth in these things, but what fancy and custom impose upon them: and yet poor creatures boast in these empty things. The gentlemen despise citizens, the



citizens contemn the poor countrymen, and yet their bloods in a bason have no different colours, for all this hot contention about blood and birth. "Boast not of thyself." Nay, to speak properly, this is not thyself—*Qui genus laudat suum, aliena jaciat*. Such parents, and such a house is nothing of thy own; these are mere extrinsic things, which are neither an honour to unworthy men, nor a disgrace to any one who is worthy.

You see, beloved in the Lord, what is now the natural posture or inclination of our souls in this degenerate and fallen estate. As the rivers of paradise have changed their channels and course since the fall, so hath man's affections, and so hath his gloriation; so that it may be truly said, that our glory is our shame and not our glory. Many glory in iniquity and sin, Psal. x. 3, and xciv. 4, but that shall undoubtedly be their shame and confusion before men and angels. How many godless persons will glory in swearing heinous and deep oaths, and some have contended about the victory in it! You account it a point of gallantry; but this triumph is like the devils in hell upon the devouring of souls. Some boast of drinking, and being able to drink others under the table: but we should be humbled and mourn for such abominations. Certain I am, that many boast of wicked designs, and malicious projects against their neighbours, if they can accomplish them. They account their glory not to take a wrong without giving a greater, nor to suffer an evil word without twenty worse in recompense. Alas! this boasting will one day be turned into gnashing of teeth, and this gloriation into that gnawing and ever-tormenting worm of conscience. "And what will ye do in the day of that visitation? And where shall be your glory?" But the most part glory and boast in things that profit not, and will become their shame, because they glory in them, that is, those gifts of God, outward or inward, temporal or spiritual, wherein there is any advancement above others; unto whom I would seriously commend this sentence to be pondered duly, "Boast not of thyself." Whatsoever

thou art, or whatsoever thou hast, boast not of thyself for it. think not much of thyself because of it. Though there be a difference in God's donation, yet let there be none in thy self-estimation. Hast thou more wisdom and pregnancy of wit, or more learning than another? Think not more of thyself for that, than thou thinkest of the ignorant and unlearned who want it. Have that same reflection upon thine own unworthiness, that thou wouldst think reasonable another that wants these endowments should have. Is there a greater measure of grace in thee? boast not, reckon of thyself as abstracted and denuded of that: and let it not add to thy value or account of thyself; put not in that to make it down-weight, and to make thee prefer thyself secretly to another. Whether it be some larger fortune in the world, or some higher place and station among men, or some abilities and perfections of body or mind, which may entice thee secretly to kiss thy hand, and bow down to thyself; yet remember that thou boast not; glory not in any thing but in the Lord. Let nothing of that kind conciliate more affection to thyself, or more contempt toward others. Let not any thing of that kind be the rule of thy self-judging, but rather entertain the view of the other side of thyself, that is the worst, and keep that most in thy eye, that thou mayest only glory in God. If thou be a gentleman, labour to be as humble in heart as thou thinkest a countryman or poor tenant should be; if thou be a scholar, be as low in thy own sight as the unlearned should be; if rich, count not thyself any whit better than the poor: yea, the higher God sets thee in place, or parts, the lower thou oughtest to set thyself. "Boast not of thyself," for any thing in thyself, or belonging to thyself; for the property of all good is taken from us since the fall, and is fallen in God's hand since we forfeited it; and there is nothing now properly ours but evil,—that is our self.



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